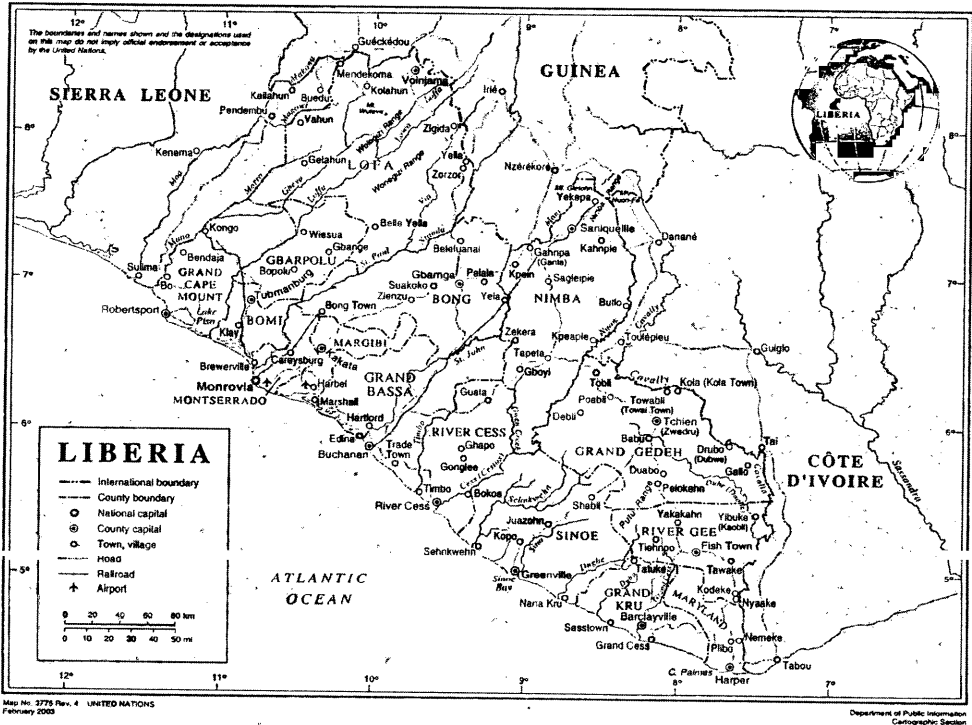


## LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL



## **LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL**

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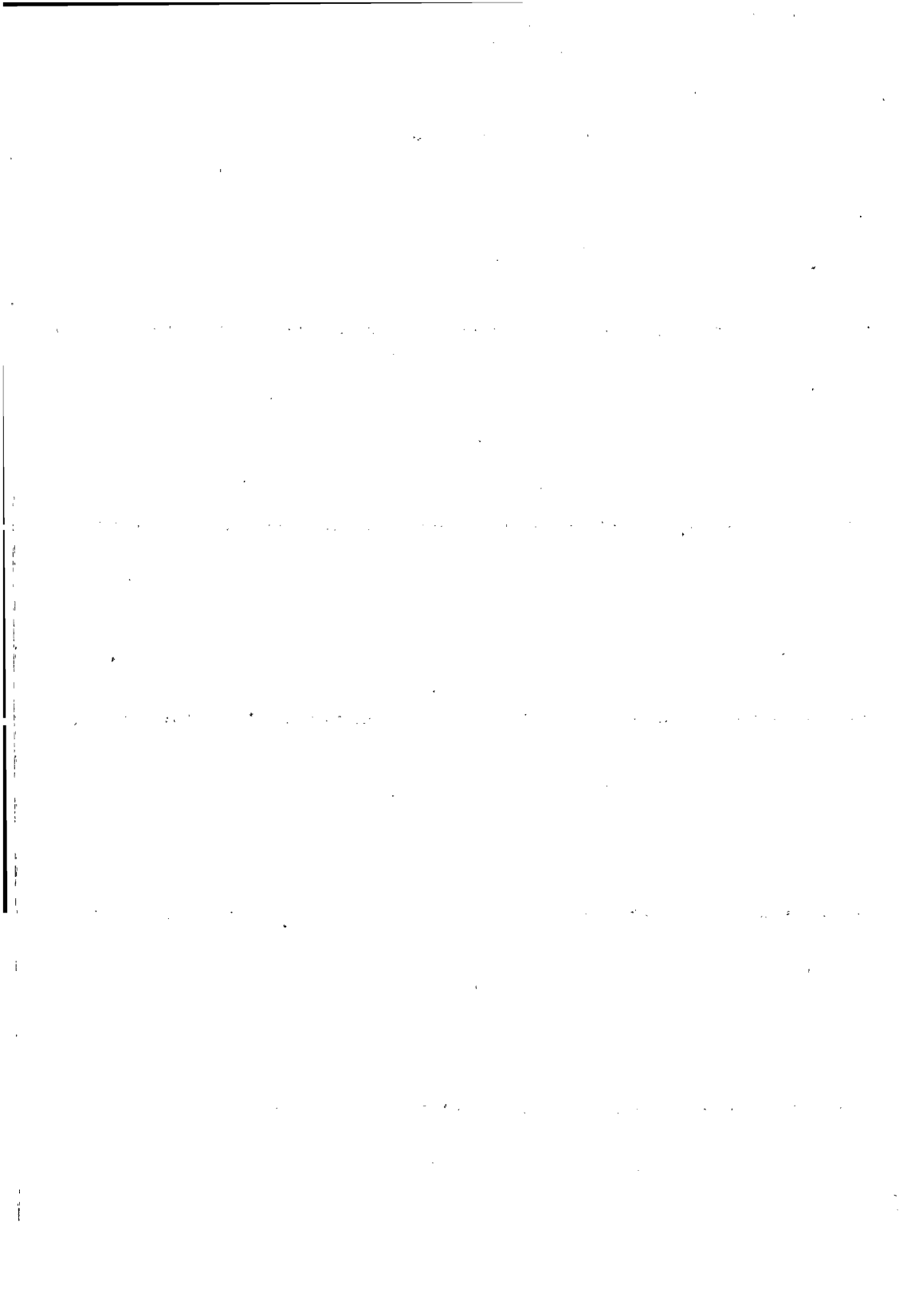
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# **Oration: Readjustment and Development of Liberia as an African State Delivered at the Celebration of the Independence of Liberia at Monrovia, Liberia July 26, 1921**

*Honorable Momolu Massaquoi\**

When the King of Grenada was forced to abdicate the Alhambra, he cried bitterly: whereupon his mother thus rebuked him – “Do not cry like a woman for what you have not defended like a man.” Fellow Citizens! Let us cherish the hope that it may never be said unto us by the mothers or women of Liberia, “Do not cry like a woman for having failed to possess and maintain like a man this sacred heritage—the Lone Star—which by divine right is yours.”

The Message which I bring to you this morning, is from the Hinterland of our Country and constitutes a plea for a new line of thought and defense for your serious and solemn consideration. We have therefore chosen as a subject for this hour:

## **Readjustment and Development of Liberia as an African State.**

This being my theme, I must diverge from the wonted paths of the learned men and women who have preceded me in addressing you from this platform on similar occasions, and who in those addresses have furnished a more or less complete outline of our achievements in the past. But I cannot pass over the great deeds of our noble Sires without at least saying a few words of commendation.

Constructive Statesmanship was more efficient and abundant among the Fathers. They founded the State, they wrote the Constitution, they suggested and designed the flag, they instituted the Courts, they organized the military system, they negotiated treaty relationship with native Kings, Princesses, Chiefs and Headmen. They secured recognition of the Great Powers, namely: England in 1848, France, Italy and the Gov-

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\* The late Honorable Momolu Massaquoi, 1896-1938, served as Liberia's Secretary of Interior; its Consul General in Germany, 1922-1930; and its Postmaster General, 1930-1931. Like President Joseph J. Roberts, Governor John B. Russwurm, Honorable Edward W. Blyden, and others, Honorable Massaquoi was not only a distinguished Liberian leader, but he was also a serious Liberian scholar. No wonder he was offered a professorship position to teach African languages at the University of Hamburg during his tenure as Liberia's General Consul in Germany. We have reproduced his entire speech in this volume because of its magnificent implication for today's Liberia.

## 2 READJUSTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERIA

ernment of the Netherlands in 1862, the United States of American in the same year and Prussia in 1867.

They inaugurated the Consular service of our Country in Europe and America, they surveyed the coast of the Republic from Sea Bar on the Northwest to Sanpedro on the Southeast; they laid out for us Cities and Townships, they divided the State into four Counties for political and judicial purposes, they instituted the two great political parties, namely—the Whig and Republican Parties; they explored the Republic as far as Highland or Musardu, and thereby determined the Eastern boundary of the Republic; they planted here the standard of Christianity and the Beacon Light of western civilization; they brought to Africa a new light, new thought, new culture from a new race in a new Continent and thereby stimulated and invigorated the Commercial and the material activities of the African.

With the aid of the American Colonization Society and the Christian Church and Philanthropists, they founded such institutions as Liberia College, the Alexandra High School, the Monrovia Seminary and Hoffman Institute. The fathers and the American Philanthropists launched upon this work with the faith and hope that it would be extended both in Church and State. That faith and hope did not entirely fail them, as the Church and State which they planted here have produced for us such men as Hilary R. W. Johnson, E. W. Blyden, B. J. K. Anderson, S. A. Benson, G. W. Gibson, S. D. Ferguson, Chas. Pitman, A. B. King, A. Barclay, Anthony Williams, James Moore, Daniel Ware, Caniel E. Howard, F. E. R. Johnson, James J. Dossen, G. M. Johnson, S. G. Harmon and a host of others too numerous to mention. These men have been and some still are leaders in Church and State.

The State which the fathers founded here was built upon the remains of ancient Empires, a fragment of whose records is still in the hands of the heirs and leaders of the Country.

Before Liberia were the advanced races of the Soudan who had been conducting a desperate struggle with Abyssinia, Nubia and the Barbary States over the Salt Mines of Tegazza in the North and Azab in the East. Cut off from these two great Salt mines, the people of Ghana, Songhai and Melli which embraced the Mellistine or Mani Empire, pressed their way westward in search of a suitable place for cooking salt. A section now lying to the north of this Country was reached and colonized by Vangama and Fangoloma, son and nephew of Kamaraba or Kamara the Great of the Soudan with their valiant warriors.

There was a second propelling force which augmented this first immigration. The Christian rulers of Spain and Portugal destroyed the Empire of the “two shores.” The Arabs and Moors who were driven into Africa pressed into the Soudan and destroyed the Kingdom of Melli and Songhai. The series of revolutions set in motion from these sources sent wave after wave of immigration to the West Coast and acted as a guide to the great emporium or market of the Soudan and thereby opened the West African Seaboard to the Hinterland. For further information we quote one of the most

enlightened women and able African Scholars of this age—namely: Lady Lugard. In her *Tropical Dependency* (page 117) we find the following:

“The Empire of Melle and its dependencies, known to the Arabs as the ‘Mellistine,’ which arose in the thirteenth century on the ruins of Ghana, was the first of the great black Mohammedan kingdoms of the Western Soudan to claim intercourse on equal terms with contemporary civilization. In the days of its greatest prosperity the territories of the Mellistine extended from the coast of the Atlantic on the west to the Niger boundary of Haussaland on the East and from the country of the cannibals on the south its protectorates extended into the desert as far as the frontier of Wargelan.

In 1353, when the fortunes of Melle were at their highest, Ibn Khaldun, who was then employed on a political mission at Biskra, met one of the notables of Takada, an important Berber town of the Desert which, like other towns of the Sahara, at that time acknowledged the Sovereignty of Melle. Amongst other details of the Caravan trade which Ibn Khaldun learned from this man he mentions that Caravans from Egypt consisting of twelve thousand laden Camels passed every year through Tekadda on their way to Melle.”

It is a fact recorded in the history of the Soudan by several historians that the people of the Kingdom of Ghana before the year of the Hegira or the Christian era 600 A. D. were white people—Arabs, Berbers and Fulani. It is also a fact recorded in history that the Emperor of Mellistine, Mansa Mousa or Manja Mousa was a pure Negro and ruled over the Kingdoms of Melle, Ghana, Songhai and Snakora which Kingdoms constituted the Mellistine Empire of the Soudan, or land of the blacks. I shall here make another quotation from Lady Lugard touching the visit of the Emperor Manja Mousa to the Holy City Mecca. This is what she says:

“He made a celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca in the year 1324, of which the details, preserved by more than one contemporary witness, furnish an interesting illustration of the condition of his country and the state preserved by its monarchs.

The caravan consisted on this occasion we are told of no less than sixty thousand persons, a considerable portion of whom constituted a military escort. The baggage of the caravan was carried generally by camels, but twelve thousand young slaves formed the personal retinue of Mansa Mousa. All these were dressed in tunics of brocade or Persian silk. When he rode, five hundred of them marched before him, each carrying a staff of pure gold, which weighed sixty-two ounces. The remainder carried the royal baggage.

The caravan was accompanied by all essential luxuries, including good cooks, who prepared elaborate repasts, not only for the king, but for the king's friends at every halting place. To defray the expenses of the journey, Mansa

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Mousa took with him gold dust to the value of upwards of a million sterling. This was carried in eighty camel loads of 300 lbs. weight each."

But even prior to the reign of Mansa Mousa, as far back as the year of the Hegira 400, which corresponds with the Christian era (1009, 1010) quite 481-482 years before the discovery of America by Columbus, Songhai was ruled by more than 52 kings in three dynasties, all of whom were black men.

It was supposed that one of these dynasties called the Zes obtained its title from one of the Pharaohs named Sa. Some of these princes were among the most learned of the age. They founded Universities which brought forth able Scholars versed in Mathematics, Astronomy, Logic, Philosophy, Philology, Anthropology and Medicine. Students from these parts have held chairs and enjoyed recognition in such institutions as the celebrated University of Alhazha in Egypt and the Universities of Fez, Tunis and Morocco.

This record as well as numerous writings, histories and traditions, show that the Soudan was in communication with Egypt, Persia, Assyria, Babylon, India and China and that the machinery of Negro Government in Africa, founded by Negro brain pure and simple, can endure and stand the test of time; and in point of merit can measure up favorably with any civilization in Asia or Europe, past or present.

It is the institutions and laws of the Government of these States to which I beg to call your attention. The Cardinal Assets which the African Ruler possesses are the land and people. The system of Government is a wheel within a wheel; each family is amenable to the head; each head of a family is amenable to the head of a clan; each head of a clan is amenable to the head of a tribe, each head of the tribe is amenable to the King. Under this system the State is enabled to be in touch with every individual. Under this system the State is able to utilize the energies of every man and of every woman and can trace delinquents and criminals with the greatest of ease; it is able to locate diseased and infected areas; it is able to circulate news or proclamations to every man and woman in the state. It can readily detect disloyalty or rebellion in the State; it can relieve famine in any locality; it can with precision apportion the taxes which are to be paid. Under this system charity is provided for, sanitation is provided for, medical treatment is provided for and each Clan is responsible for every disabled and sick individual within its ward. Every able bodied man is bound to protect the State, and, in the order of service, the sons of Chiefs and Noblemen, not the poor and forsaken, are always found in the van or front of the army and are generally sent to the most dangerous point.

The family and clan are responsible for the chastity of young women and for the training of young men in two separate and distinct Institutions; and no man or woman can rightly say that he or she has not been well indoctrinated into the mysterious laws of nature which govern sex. Under this system every child that is conceived and born I know and every woman who conceives and brings forth a child is honored; and yet great sympathy is manifested for those who have never conceived. Under this system



womanhood is protected, and the family is held responsible to the head of the tribe for the misdemeanor of any of its male members. Under this system each individual contributes to the upkeep of the State through their respective family and Clan. Under this system each individual must participate in the farming operations of its family and clan.

In connection with the foregoing provisions there is a Criminal Code which I have not the time to elucidate; but I may say this, that the law governing the land and that appertaining to true womanhood are fundamental laws from which no one can escape, not even the Prince.

**State Building on African Lines.** We have already surveyed the gallantry, sacrifices and fidelity of the Pioneer Fathers who laid the keel and fastened the ribs of the Ship of State; but I should like to invite your attention to a phase I state craft to which had our Pioneer Fathers paid greater attention, greater and speedier success might have resulted. We have hitherto depended entirely upon foreign ideas for the development of our social and economic condition. While those ideas and institutions may be good for American and Europe, they are foreign to our soil; and, like the apple, will grow and bloom thereon, but will produce no fruit. This is an old problem; it is as old as the hills of Montserrado. While the State has made immense progress, the leaders were not informed of the climatic conditions of the coast. Europe and America did not know that beyond the forest belt lay a beautiful country with salubrious climate, beautiful rivers and fertile soil abounding in all that is wholesome for man. Had they been fortunate enough to plant the Capital up at Mosardu, our progress would have been a hundred fold.

**Reforms.** The exaggerated, unkind as well as untruthful comments circulated abroad as to misgovernment, cruelty and lawlessness in this Republic have confronted every Liberian who has traveled abroad. But while we deny and deplore these comments and statements, yet we feel that in certain respects reforms are absolutely necessary, as they are in other countries and we ask your indulgence while we attempt to point out some of them.

We will first of all take the case of the Liberian Soldier. No where in the civilized world, except in Liberia, is a soldier expected and required to provide his own uniform, pay his own expenses to the drill ground, feed himself while on parade and is punished if he fails to comply with these regulations.

**Civil Service.** In the case of the civil service departments, the salaries of our young men are wholly incommensurate with the volume of work performed and owing to this inadequacy of salaries a few young men have occasionally resorted to dishonest practices, bringing disgrace upon themselves and discredit to the State. In spite of these drawbacks, however, I am happy to state that the majority of our young civil service servants maintain a clean record, doing honor to themselves and credit to the State.

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**Education.** In the matter of Education there is room for improvement; those responsible for the mental training of our young—Professors, School Teachers and others should be amply rewarded for their eminent services; for on them lies the responsibility for the molding of the intellectual and moral characters of the future rulers of the State.

I appeal to you today therefore, fellow citizens as the sovereign people of the Republic that you may direct your National Representatives to make adequate appropriations for the expenses of your gallant men who have carried your flag from east to west, from north to south, all over this domain—and who still uphold the standard of this Republic by their strong arm.

Without the prodigious work daily performed by young men in the Civil service, the affairs of the State would be in a chaotic condition. It therefore behooves us to guarantee the efficiency of these workers by making ample and fitting provisions for their upkeep.

I further appeal to you, today, that you may turn your attention to your distinguished citizens who are pondering day by day over erudite texts and difficult mathematical problems to prepare your sons and daughters for the perpetuity of the State and see to it that a sufficient appropriation be made to remunerate all such teachers whether they be in Government or Parochial Schools.

**Liberty of the Press.** The sinister shadow of autocracy has of late years frequently stalked across the threshold of the body politic, stifling individualism as well as individual initiative, sealing the lips of the people and fettering the hands of the journalist. This autocracy, unless eradicated, will create a system of serfdom that will end in national decay culminating in utter distraction.

**Party Government.** I am fully persuaded that no democracy is safe with only one party ever dominant in the State. The leaders of the Country therefore should gladly welcome wholesome reform in our political system. They should return to the good old days of our fathers when party government operated beneficently for the weal for the Commonwealth; thus would the political outlook of the people be broadened and the services of the best men of the country given to the State. The fundamental ideas of democracy are: "the greatest good to the greatest number" and "a government of the people, by the people and for the people." When the people of a State are debarred from selecting their Senators and Representatives according to the dictates of their consciences, woe until that State. History offers many instances of this. When the Roman Empire was conducted by the Conscript Fathers and the Emperor, Rome was safe. When despotic Rulers took the reins of Government from the hands of the people, Rome fell. Here in our midst, a man, however qualified and however desirous the people may be that he should represent them in the Legislature, stands but a poor chance of election should the party leaders be opposed to him.

This state of things makes it possible for incompetent men to make their appearance in our Legislative Bodies who might be more usefully employed as farmers rather than as Statesmen. In such circumstances the responsibilities of State are thrown upon

the shoulders of a few competent men who are over-burdened with public cares, while, on the other hand, farming operations suffer in consequence.

The African Sun of Grand Bassa County dated June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1921, contains a series of important statements and queries. The Editor asks: "What will the trustees of the State tell the People?" "What can they tell the impartially?" "Are the young men and women, prepared to think, if so what are they thinking about?" Our answers to that queries are:

The trustees of the State should tell the people of Liberia that the fundamental basis of Government is a sound, intelligent and economic system of agriculture. The young men and young women of Liberia upon this 74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our self determination should prepare themselves to think of our record of achievements when one hundred years ago next December our fathers signed the Treaties with the native Chiefs and Kings of this part of Africa. They should this day direct their gaze interiorward. They should meditate on this history and significance of indigenous African institutions and should like the Japanese make an anthology of whatever is good of those institutions and whatever is good of European Institutions.

We have within this State virile manhood among the masses. We have among the masses men and women who can discriminate between right and wrong from a political point of view; but they need leaders. For a healthy body politic there should be no less than two political parties each aspiring to the government of the people, by the people and for the people. When such a state of things comes to pass, the contending parties will establish a healthy rivalry which would inevitably redound to the good of the State.

When Louis XIV of France vain gloriously announced "*l'etat c'est moi*," "I am the state, time and the current of events soon proved that it was the people of France and not Louis that was the State. It is said that on one occasion when differences of opinion arose between Her Imperial Majesty late Queen Victoria of England and Mr. Gladstone Premier of the Country, Her Majesty said to Mr. Gladstone, "Do you not know that I am the Queen of England?" to which Mr. Gladstone replied with all the dignity of a Statesman combined with the urbanity of a Courtier—"Yes, Madam; but may it please Your majesty to now that I am the people of England?"

In December 1821 the Kings of Montserrado resigned the sovereignty and integrity of this land into our hands that we may enlighten, educate and lead them into a higher civilization; so that next December will chronicle the hundredth anniversary of the sovereign rule of the Americo-Liberian over this Country.

The strength of any nation lies in her assets, and the greatest asset possessed by nation is her youth and people. Where are the wards of this nation, the upward of 3 million strong? They are in the hinterland and on the coast. They are our wards and God has committed their destiny into our hands. What shall be our report when we are called to a higher account? Shall we answer as one of the three servants in Scriptures who did not put his Master's money to usury, but kept it and brought not result?

## 8 READJUSTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERIA

**Taxation and Representation.** It must be evident to every intelligent student of the Constitution that its original framers entertained a lively sense of the importance of the vital principle of taxation with representation.

Since the framing of that document the territorial acquisition of the Republic has been augmented interiorward from 40 to 250 or more miles. The statesmanship from 1847 to the present day should be highly commended for having secured these valuable accessions in territory. The Paramount Chiefs and inhabitants of the Country have been led to appreciate the desirability of paying taxes for the maintenance of peaceful Government. Everywhere they have shown willingness to construct improved roads under modern road builders. They have impressed upon the Government through their various District Commissioners, the necessity for schools among them. They have willingness in every respect to support the Government, as was clearly demonstrated during the great European war. The Government on the other hand have promised to maintain among them educational institutions and to develop their Country out of the taxes they pay. These people have complied with or obeyed every request of, and kept every promise they have made to the Government. It is now left with the Government to fulfill its promise of road construction and of the establishment of schools in the Hinterland.

These loyal Chiefs whose people pay taxes should be represented in the Legislature. "Taxation without representation" has been the cause of serious convulsions in more favored countries. We might argue that they do not understand English which is our Court language; but the pertinent question might be asked by them; "Should a man be debarred from privileges to which he is entitled under the Constitution simply because he does not understand a foreign language adopted by the minority of the people?" or if we argue that the Chiefs are not sufficiently intelligent to comprehend and follow legislative discussions such argument would not only be a display of ignorance on our part of the mental calibre of the natives and an under estimation of the mental results of centuries of experience in the management of their own kingdoms, but it would show evasion of their request which simply means that they wish to have one man of each political zone to inform the lawmakers in session of the kind of laws which are conducive to their growth and well being.

**Inconsistencies of Policies.** To facilitate the operation of the Government in the Hinterland and to obviate any friction; there should be a more stable, consistent and defined policy for that portion of the state immediately under the rule of the tribal authority of the Country. No better language can be used to elucidate the point at issue than the language of Ex-President Barclay in his first Inaugural Address 1904. He said inter alia. Our present narrow and jealous trade policy, initiated in the sixties has had the worst possible effect upon our political relations with the outlying native population. Take for instance the Manna and Gallinas territories, formerly a part of Liberia. Why did we lose there? Because we neglected to look after and conciliate the populations. We thought their wishes and desires unworthy of serious consideration

and after enduring the situation for many years they detached themselves from the interest of Liberia, and carried their territories with them. The same thing happened with respect to the territory below the Cavilas and although we regarded the secession of those districts a great national loss, we have never drawn the proper lesson from the incident and we are still inclined to proceed on the old mistaken lines. Our old attitude of indifference toward the native populations must be dropped. A fixed and unwavering policy with respect to the natives' preceeding on the lines of interest in their local affairs, protection, civilization and safeguarding their institutions when not brutal should at once be set on foot.

It is our opinion that policies that are fundamental should be maintained without any regard to the personality of officials or the persons composing the administrations. What one administration promises the people either in return for services rendered or for the purpose of inducing them to take forward steps towards any progressive movement, should be binding upon succeeding administrations.

Fellow Citizens: If we are to maintain control of our Hinterland, if we are to succeed in carrying out the magnificent program sketched for the economic, commercial and educational development of the state if we are to unity and blend all of the forces of the State and utilize them for one gigantic purpose to wit: the safely and perpetuity of the State, the Government of the Republic must keep faith with her citizens whether they be aboriginal or Americo-Liberian.

**The Three Elements.** We are all aware that there are three distinct elements within the State – Afro-American, Americo-Liberian and Aborigines. The Afro-American and the Aboriginal Chiefs founded the State while the Americo-Liberian up to the present has furnished the greater quota of Statesmen, thinkers and men of advanced views. The aboriginal peoples have formed the major Agricultural and industrial elements. They have furnished the larger percentages of farmers and Seamen and at the present time the greater number of soldiers to maintain the flag. In addition to this they have furnished to the State some of the best rulers of the different tribes. All of these elements were originally one people and the effort of one faction to discriminate against the other is detrimental to the interest of every faction in the State. Each element is inseparable from and indispensable to the other in the conduct of the State. We deplore the tendency that obtains among certain classes of our people to discriminate in a prejudicial way against the Afro-American call him "Come Here." It is not a question of who may have come here or who may have been born here; for we are all *here*. The vital question is who is of African descent and who is able to furnish the best service to the State?

**Public Intelligence.** In all democratic countries there is a semi-official organ which periodically informs the sovereign people of the state of affairs in the various departments of Government and according to our solemn oath and obligation we should inform the people of Liberia whose trustees we are, of the state of public affairs and of the wellbeing or otherwise of the charge entrusted to our care.

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**Discouraging Features.** I have chosen to avail myself of this opportunity to make mention of some of the discouraging features of the public life of this Republic I refer to the apparent rejection of advice from our great men. In a great many instances the best minds of the State are not generally acceptable, hence the Country loses the benefit of their advanced views and matured judgment. As a case in point we may instance Professor Benjamin Anderson who on his return from Musardu where he had been heartily welcomed and where he had concluded a treaty with the Chiefs to the effect that the Government of the Republic would include within its sphere of influence the Kingdom of Musardu embracing a hundred thousand square miles or more, and that it would act as spokesman and trustee of that domain, was confronted with the greatest opposition by some of the men then prominent in public life. It was then alleged that he simply wished to live out in the bush. Needless to say that his advice was not taken. Professor Anderson went out on a second expedition and brought with him on his return a great variety of mineral from both Musardu and Bila where upon the Colonization Society urged that we build a City there, but unfortunately Anderson with his report was simply ignored.

Doctor Blyden during his visit to Bopora stipulated an agreement with the chiefs for the education of their sons and daughters side by side with the children of the founders of the state. These children were subsequently sent down to Monrovia with the result that Doctor Blyden was charged with the desire of opening a Harem. Blyden and Anderson were both great exponents of Liberian educational efforts and they both stood with credit among the greatest minds of their race. For more than once did the British Government retain the service of Doctor Blyden as leader of the famous Futa Jarlo expedition and director of Monhamedan education in the Colony of Sierra Leone. The British Government sought his advice on many important issues but with us his own people he was not recognized. As a people, regardless of the differences that might exist between men whether personal, political or otherwise, we should inculcate within us and transmit to posterity the virtue of doing honor and singing praises to the great men of our country and race, and wherever they may be.

Permit me also to call your attention to the women of Liberia as political factors, whose services are indispensable at this age and time. In all the histories of mankind have always been found women of extraordinary character like Cleopatra of Egypt, Zenobia of Palmyra, Elizabeth of England, Isabella of Spain, Maria Teresa of Austria, Cathrine the Great of Russia, Jeon of Arc of France, Harriet Beecher Stowe of America and Mitilda Newport of Liberia. Even among the aborigines of this Country, in their primitive state there have arisen women of power and influence who have contributed largely to the improvement of communities and in some cases have taken the lead in the affairs of their respective tribes. The women of Liberia following in the wake of their great sister characters should band themselves into a league. They should not only see to it that they are righted in matters of peculiar interest to women and womanhood, but they should take a firm stand against any possible corruption in politics.

Why should they not be given the complete franchise? Why should they not be eligible to election to the House and Senate of the Republic? Why should they not be admitted into the judiciary and sit as judges on the bench? They should remember Deborah and buckle their armor. They have given great Britain and the United States great and satisfactory results in their divorce or matrimonial courts, they have been instrumental in bringing couples together who had been at variance, conciliated them and sent them home rejoicing. In the police service they have worked marvels in Europe and American, and have received the highest commendations from their respective States.

Fellow male citizens! Let us exchange positions for a moment. Suppose you were a woman, paying taxes to the State from your hard earnings and sacrifices, would you not think it unfair for that State to exact taxes from you and at the same time deny you the privilege of representation in a democratic commonwealth? The very system is diametrically opposed to all democratic principles of Government.

**Agricultural and Commercial Decline.** In days gone by there were merchant princes in Liberia, who conducted large businesses in the export and import trade of the Republic. Some had ships of their own plying between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas. Where are all these or their successors today? If they have disappeared what is the cause of their disappearance? There were also great farmers engaged in extensive cultivation of Coffee, Sugar-Cane, Cotton, Arrowroot, Rice and other edible products. In fact, the two banks of the St. Paul River in those days presented the appearance of two collateral cities, each a veritable Garden of Eden, presenting an unbroken chain of beautifully cultivated fields, glorious to behold.

Where are they today? There is an economic cause for the decay of both of these enterprises taken up by the fathers. Among the many causes which led to the downfall of this prosperity I may be permitted to name one or two. The foundation was wrong and there was neither cooperative nor communistic principle in them. Secondly, the fabric was based on selfishness and each individual man or proprietor endeavored to enrich himself and his family, no matter what befell the others.

**Economic Development on Modern Lines.** The Potential asset of the hinterland. For the last five hundred years this coast has been known to the civilized world as the grain coast—a coast and hinterland with soil adaptable to the growth of all kinds of cereals, Rice, Indian and Egyptian corn, Benni-seed and various other cereals indigenous to the Country and yet because of the lack of development on agricultural lines we are still importing rice instead of exporting it. We do not, because we have hitherto depended solely on crop, intended by the natives to be raised for their personal consumption.

The prices of exportable products of the soil such as Palm Kernels, Palm oil, Coffee, Cocoa and Piassava have been reduced in foreign markets not through lack of demand, but they have fallen simply on account of rude preparation and the lack of scientific method of their cultivation. For example the Brazilian Government has a

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Minister of Agriculture who superintends inquires into and supervises all foreign operations in the Country. Hence Brazil today leads in the Coffee market of the world from scions principally obtained in Liberia, while the Liberian Coffee has fallen very heavily in the foreign market.

The Government of Brazil further help their farmers in this wise: when Coffee is low in value, the Government controls all until the market has improved and in the interim the Government advances the low rate offered for such Coffee in the market. When the sale is affected to the advantage of the farmer the balance is paid to him. You can see what great advantage is secured to the farmer by this method and how the Government obtains an indirect advantage on the export and import of the Country.

In the Government of the United States there is also a Cabinet Minister of Agriculture. In his voluminous annual report for 1918 under the caption, "Work of the Department," we find these words from the pen of the Minister of Agriculture:

"It would require a volume even to outline all the things which the Department of Agriculture has done. It stimulated production, increasingly controlled plant and animal diseases, reducing losses from the cattle tick, hog cholera, tuberculosis, predatory animals and crop pests, and in conjunction with the Department of labor, rendered assistance to the farmers in securing labor. It safeguarded seed stocks and secured and distributed good seeds to farmers (at cost) for cash; acted jointly with the Treasury Department in making loans from the President's special fund to distressed farmers in drought-stricken areas; greatly assisted in the marketing of farm products, and under enormous difficulties, helped the farmers to secure a larger supply of fertilizers."

Under the caption meat supply, the same report commenced as follows:

"Farm animals and their products received a large share of the Department's attention. Efforts were directed towards increasing the output of meat, milk, butter and other fats, cheese, poultry, eggs, wool and hides; first, by encouraging the live stock raised to make a direct production of herds and flocks and their products, second by assisting him to prevent loss from disease. The result of this cooperative system introduced by the Government [with] the people of the United States is measured not only by the wealth of the Government but by the prosperity of the farmers."

From the yearbook of the Department of Agriculture 1904 page 12 we glean the following record of astounding success among American farmers: "An occupation that has produced such an unthinkable value as one aggregating nearly Five Billion (\$5,000,000,000) Dollars within a year may be better measured by some Comparisons. All of the gold mines of the entire world have not produced since Columbus discovered America a greater value of gold than the farmers of this country have produced in wealth in two years; this year's product is over six times the amount of the capital stocks of all National Banks: it comes within three fourths of a billion dollars of



equaling the value of the manufactures of 1900, less the cost of materials used; it is twice the sum of our exports and imports for the year; it is two and a half times the gross earnings from the operations of the railway: it is three and a half times the value of all minerals produced in this country, including coal, iron ore, gold, silver and quarried stones."

Agriculture is indubitably the foundation of all stages of society and when intelligently pursued yields marvelous financial results. Is it premature therefore for me to suggest for the consideration of the State leaders that there should be a Minister of Agriculture in our Cabinet—a man with a wide intellectual outlook and vast experience in this particular industry, one in hearty sympathy with the native population which constitutes the major asset of the State?

Under the Ministry of Agriculture it is essential that a cooperative system with the farmers be introduced not only to guide and direct in production, but also to devise means whereby the farmers might be financed from time to time as they are in need, and thereby do away with the old system of selling their crop in advance for little or nothing, or leaving the farm to go to ruin. This cooperative system would give birth to numerous farming associations and create the much needed revival in Agriculture. If we spend annually in the Department 25% of the Internal Revenue, we would not only place the State on a more permanent economic basis but we would thereby minimize the cost of living per capita to 50% with the result that the upkeep of the Frontier Force, for instance, would be considerably reduced; provided however, that we maintain as efficient officers in the Department of Agriculture as we have in the command of the Frontier Force.

Ex-President Howard, the John the Baptist for Agriculture in this Country, upon entering public service as Chief Magistrate of this State warned the people of Liberia to resort to the soil, and, on one occasion, after reviewing the various military companies, said – "This is excellent, our boys have done well; but unless we resort to the soil we cannot live."

**Animal Industry.** We have splendid breed and species of cattle in our Hinterland—several species of the Mandingo cows, the Dey or Bassa cows, stout and short legged and the hornless species found principally in the Mano and Gio Sections. There should be a Government stock farm in the hinterland to preserve the breed of the animals as it is not impossible for animals of so rare a species to become extinct.

**Land Question.** The idea that there is land anywhere in Africa which belongs to no owner is a sad mistake. The original owners may be extinct but there is always a claim of succession. The land originally belonged to the tribe of the people who first occupied it and it may pass under secondary ownership by means of purchase, conquest or protectorate of a more powerful tribe. In a tribe there is always a man who has more right to the land than anyone else—possibly because of the ownership of such land by his immediate ancestry or because of valor in war by his ancestors leading to the possession of such land. It is to him, and not necessarily to the Chief, to whom all

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land disputes are referred and his decision is law, which must be respected by the Court of Chiefs.

The land system in Africa is communistic: no individual owns and sells land, but what belongs to the tribe belongs to all members of such tribe. Each member of a tribe is entitled to a piece of land which he is able to cultivate and no more. In conducting negotiations for the acquisition of aboriginal lands, one cannot be too careful in probing into the traditional history of such lands; as, otherwise, sacrilege may unwittingly be committed. For example, some lands are sacred by reason of association, in that they have been or still are sacred groves dedicated exclusively to religious worship: or, they may be the burial places of native Kings, Princes, Noblemen and Zoes or learned men.

The present administration is to be congratulated on having succeeded in reorganizing the Board of Education on such broad and excellent basis—excellent by reason of the high intellectual and moral order of its personnel: broad because of the wide range of usefulness wielded by the eminent men of which that Board is composed.

We feel confident that under the direction of our tactful Minister of Education, backed by the hearty cooperation of these distinguished scholars, and further strengthened by the addition of distinguished local Educationists, the problems besetting public education in Liberia will, in due course, be satisfactorily solved. It is therefore an opportune moment for us to offer our felicitations to the Board of Trustees of Liberia College, Cuttington Collegiate Institute, College of West Africa and other educational agencies in Liberia, on the roseate educational vista now open to view.

It is now a hundred years since the fathers of Liberia functioned as political entities in these domains. It is fully seventy-four years since they acquired sovereign rights over this State: and with the accumulated experiences of those years we, their successors, are today confronted by a crying need—the need of a National University racy of the soil which will act at once as a focal point whence light will irradiate throughout the land and, as a crucible that will turn to useful account every foreign and every local agency that could conveniently be utilized to the welfare of our posterity and the good of humanity at large. The University I have in my mind's eye, must be one, founded on utilitarian principles. It must be devoted to the dissemination of knowledge of useful arts and sciences so much needed in the cultivation of our soil, the economic development of the State and the introduction of such systems in our political and social science; as are peculiar to African life—such as have always made Africa a safe and unique place for the banquet of the gods. It is therefore incumbent upon every educational agency at work in our midst, particularly those already enumerated, to strain every nerve for the materialization of this ideal, so that in due course they may form the nucleus of such a University.

Without the help of the entire body of citizens, the materialization of this ideal can never be realized. It is to the entire body of citizens therefore that we appeal in this connection. We urgently appeal to you citizens to direct your Representative to appro-

priate 25 per cent of the Internal Revenue for educational purposes—15 per cent of which should go to the assistance of District Schools and 10 per cent to the support of the National University. Such a University to be useful in a National sense must be planted in a healthy locality in the Interior with an appropriation of 5000 acres of land, 1000 of which should be opened for immediate use and the remaining 4000 held in reserve for future expansion.

When such a happy consummation shall have been attained, when our vast hinterland shall have begun to bring forth a perpetual harvest, when every hill and dale shall have begun to deliver up its treasures of gold and precious stones, when men shall have learned to be indifferent to diversities of creed and dogmas and to sit under their own Kola and Palm Trees, worshipping the Maker of all, none daring to make them afraid, then shall our hearts beat in unison as we sing with unfaltering voices:

**ALL HAIL LIBERIA HAIL!**

## Making History: The Case of a Gola Origin Tale

*Warren L. d'Azevedo\**

As with the Gola of western Liberia, "a history" is both product and source of an individual or group's sustaining identity. All history is hindsight, an invention by peoples of particular cultures, times, places and intentions that provides meaning and utility to accounts of the past. The case of a Gola origin tale, constructed and reconstructed long before and during recent traumatic events in Liberia, illustrates not only the manipulative aspect of history but also, in this case, the inadvertent effect of the role of an alien observer. Despite enormous obstacles the process appears to be irrepressible.

The Gola of Liberia are newcomers to a large part of the territory which they now occupy. A tradition of migration, conquest and consolidation of new lands is common to all the widely dispersed chiefdoms. Equally general is the tradition of having migrated from a common homeland in the northeastern interior of Liberia which they call Komgba. These traditions emerge from experiences and events purported to have occurred within the past four generations, or one-hundred and fifty to two hundred years. Historical viewpoints are extremely localized and are limited in depth of time to the founders of important towns or the first ancestor of a family to have attached himself to the ruler of one of these towns. Though genealogies rarely extend back more than three or four generations to a founder or newly arrived ancestor, there are infrequent family traditions which include genitors in the Komgba homeland of northeastern Liberia. For example, a genealogy will begin with ancestor X who, with a small band of relatives and followers, founded the new town or allied himself with the king of an already established town. This is considered to be the significant starting point. Nevertheless, if questioned specifically about the origin of ancestor X, the elders of a rare family may be able to offer the name of the ancestral Komgba relatives of this ancestor and may, in a few instances, trace the dim outlines of the long migratory trek - often involving stopovers en route of a generation or two - which brought the ancestor to the present town where his other descendants now dwell.

Most families, however, are unable to recall any ancestors earlier than a founder or a first arrival in the local area. The assumption is always made explicit, nevertheless, that these early ancestors came from Komgba. There are a few exceptions in the case of

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very ancient towns apparently established long before the major waves of migration. In these towns it is interesting to note that the genealogical depth is not much greater than elsewhere, and the first remembered ancestor is assumed to be a descendant of a long line of forgotten peoples who brought a town into existence. The traditions of origin of these very old settlements tend to be mythological and contradictory in content. The elders will state, on the one hand, that their town has existed since the beginning of time, and that their remote forgotten ancestors emerged from the earth itself in a way which cannot be told because such matters are part of the secret knowledge which protects the town. On the other hand, the same elders may affirm that their ancestors must have come from Komgba because without Komgba there would be no Gola in this world."

This emphasis upon "Golaness" and a common homeland, despite the shallowness of local histories, is one of the most striking features of the Gola concept of themselves as a far-flung, diverse, but traditionally united people. Even where genealogies reveal that the original ancestors of a town were preponderantly non-Gola peoples from whom later Gola migrants wrested control by conquest or slow infiltration, the eventual predominance of Gola language, culture and social institutions tends to submerge all differences in a militantly affirmed Gola past. There is, however, a general recognition of degrees of "Golaness" and a multiplicity of relatively isolated local traditions. The Gola of the interior, and particularly of the Komgba region, are said to be "real Gola," while those of the newer territories to the south and west are spoken of as "different different" Gola. The Gola of the Kpo, Senje and Gobla sections admit that their language and customs have been strongly influenced by the adjacent De and Vai peoples while those of the Gbo, Bodje, Ding and Todi sections are said to have been so affected by their contact with the Kpelle and Mandingo peoples "that a real Komgba man would scarcely know that they are Gola." Kone and Po kpa are likewise considered divergent peoples due to their close association with the Vai and Mende. There are, furthermore, large groups of Gola who had founded towns in what is now Mende territory in Sierra Leone. Though it is said that these people are now more Mende than Gola in their language and customs, they are, nevertheless, considered to be Gola "because they claim that they are so." The concept of "Golaness" includes all peoples who speak the Gola language and who affirm a Gola heritage of migration from the Komgba homeland. The people of Komgba, itself, refer to these dispersed Gola groups either patronizingly as "our children who left us and went to new lands," or contemptuously as "those mixed-tribes who claim that they are Gola."

Until quite recently the various Gola "countries" (*ma fuwa*) were independent territorial units which frequently made war upon one another or which united in brief alliances for the purpose of making war against more distant Gola or peoples of other tribes. In some cases more lasting ties were established between these units by inter-marriage of royal families; but in general these ties were tenuous and the Gola of adjacent *fuwa* often tended to look upon one another as "foreigners" and potential

enemies. In appeals for aid and alliance reference would be made to common language, heritage, and significant marriages which had established family ties between groups; but the issues of war could make "enemies of brothers and friends of strangers."

It has been pointed out that all Gola groups, regardless of distinctive local traditions, speak of the Komgba region of northwestern Liberia as the ancient homeland of the Gola prior to the dispersion toward the sea. This information does not come to the investigator in the form of legend or myths of origin but, rather, as casual comments which suggest an assumption so taken for granted that it functions as an underlying premise of all historical narrative. Yet there is little evidence of more than an idle curiosity about such ancient matters pertaining to the forgotten individuals who lived prior to the first known ancestors of local genealogies. When pressed by an outsider for traditions concerning the origin of the Gola, an occasional old man will, with an effort, come forth with a few dim recollections of remarks made to him by his own elders. These sparse comments from widely distributed sources are, nevertheless, fairly consistent in general outlines. Many of the old people state that though Komgba is the most recent homeland of the Gola, they have heard it said in the past that the Gola once lived in a region of what is now Sierra Leone.

The most extended remarks concerning this tradition were received from an elder of the Te Gola and two old chiefs of Komgba. The Te Gola version given by elder Boyma Sando is as follows:

Te, Kpo, Gobla, Mana and Senje are recent countries. The Gola are a very old tribe ... very old. These Mandingoes who are praying around here today are trying to tell us that there is even a quarter for the Gola in that great town of theirs called Mecca in Egypt. They say that the Arabic word for us there is kresiyu. That is what all these Mandingoes coming into the country are telling us. But how can these strangers tell us where the Gola came from when we ourselves do not know That is long-time business. My parents never told me much about such things, and if any man here would know I would know. My old people have only told me that the Gola are very old. They told me that we came from a country which is now on the English side [Sierra Leone]. That was long before those English were there. We owned some of that country and there were great Gola towns and places of prayer there. That was near a river called Mwa which was the old boundary between the Mende and the Gola. These old towns still exist today and some Gola live in them yet. They are ruled by the Mende people now. One of these towns is Bundo bu. There is also Toma yama and Ko diya which are Gola names and old Gola towns. While the Gola were there they began to have trouble with a new tribe who came near them. We call this tribe the Kpa Mende. There was a war between the Gola and these people that lasted many years. The Gola began to come down toward the great forest to escape from the war. No other people lived in

that forest. The Gola came to a river called Mo [Mano] and they settled there and prospered. I do not know the names of those people who came there first, but they began to build great towns like Gon Koko, Jawajei, Duma mana and Zui. That country was Komgba, but in those days they called it *Ko mo* after that new river. As the Gola came into this new country they settled in different places according to the families they had come from in Diye. Soon they began to enlarge, and there were many Gola and they had great farms and towns. The Mende became jealous again and tried to make war, but it was far for them to come and they were tired when they reached there and the Gola easily defeated them. But some Gola did not want to see those wars, and they began to come down further toward the sea. Our parents whom we know are those Gola who came down from Komgba.

Another version suggests that a town in the Mende country of Sierra Leone called Kpangoma was a great central Gola town in the days before the Komgba section was settled. There is another town which the Gola called Toma yama after the great mountain which is still an important sacred place to the Gola today. Every year it is said that certain Gola families of Komgba make a pilgrimage to pray at that mountain. This is now in Mende country. It is also said that the Mende request that the Gola send someone to pray to the mountain because an ancient spirit resides within it who will only listen to prayers in the Gola language.

The version given by the chiefs of Komgba agrees with the view that the ancient territory of the Gola extended to - and even beyond - the Mwa [Moa River] in what is now Sierra Leone. The Komgba account assigns the Gola an extensive ancient territory beyond the Mano River [Mo], including the lands around the upper reaches of the Moa River to the borders of what is now French Guinea. These Gola were troubled by the advances of a people whom they called *a kpa*. They did not abandon their territory, however, though many of them did migrate southward to the region which is now Komgba. A great many remained and defended the old lands against the Mende. According to this version, the Gola held all the territory of the Komgba region and a vast traditional region in what is now the western portion of Mende country long before the Liberian colonists landed at Cape Mesurado. Some of them had already begun to move down along the Mano River and had settled areas near the coast. The account of the Komgba chiefs asserts further that the Gola managed to hold their old lands from the Mende until the British and French began to "play crook and help the Mende and the Gissi to fight us" - a reference to the border disputes of the latter part of the nineteenth century involving the Liberian Government and British and French colonial governments.

Along with these rare and sketchy accounts of Gola antiquity there is an occasional mention of a legendary pair called *Goa* and *Gbli*. The combining of their names into the word *goa gbli* has created a term which stands for "the real Gola truth," or "the old truth." It is used most often in connection with the kind of legendary or mythological

material which offers an explanation of origins. *Goa gbli* refers to myths which may be taken as "fact," something which is believed to have actually happened in the distant past, or something which may be taken on the word of the ancestors. Thus, an elder may begin his speech with the remark: "what I tell you now is *goa gbli*. This means truth - to talk the truth and hear the truth. *Gbli* was the person, and *Goa* was Gola. The deep meaning is that man *Gbli* who owns *Goa*. This is our ancient way of talking. It is an ancient idea - the Gola truth."

As frequently as I heard this usage I was never able to find anyone who could offer a less abstruse explanation of the term. Like many Gola legends and myths one must conclude either that their formal versions are controlled by secret society restrictions or that all but the gist of them has been forgotten by a highly mobile people who place emphasis upon the more recent and practical content of localized traditions. *Goa gbli* was associated with any ideas that had to do with the origin of the Gola as a people. The fact that the word *Goio* or *Gola* means "to cry" would be *goa gbli*. The idea that the Gola once were called by some other name, or that women once ruled as kings, or that all these things of the distant past took place in a far country, would be considered *goa gbli*. It is said that women were once offered leadership of the *Gbon* or *Poro* society of the men, but they refused it. This idea is also *goa gbli*.

While in the field, the present investigator found in the manuscript of a young Gola student at the University of Liberia (Mabande-Johnson 1956) an extended version of this legend taken down by his father many years ago in the Kpo kpa Gola section. It provides an interesting sidelight on the manner in which an early form of a legend may be lost or withheld while its disparate elements persist as part of erudition about the past. The following is a brief summary of the recorded legend:

There was once a ruler of a far country whose wife had twins. The mother died a year after the twins were born and her co-wives took over their care. The children would not accept the breast of any woman but their own mother, so they were weaned when she died. The oldest twin was named Jasa Zina, but because she wept so much in her infancy the woman who cared for her renamed her Goio which means "cry." The other twin had been named Gbele, but she was cared for by her father's grandmother who renamed her Goa after herself.

The king who was father of the twins had a powerful and popular brother by the name of Gbeia Gbejua. When Golo became a woman this brother was attracted to her. He waited until the King died and the people had made him king in his brother's place. Then he married Golo, his own brother's eldest daughter.

As he was a great warrior and much admired, the people could not object. But as soon as he had married he went off on a long military expedition and forced the people to accept Golo as their ruler while he was gone. They soon found that though she was beautiful and luxury-loving she was a powerful



queen. Gbela Gbejua was now able to make war abroad for long intervals because the country was held strongly in the hands of his own wife.

In order to rule effectively she caused herself and her sister to join all the important societies, and they became the first women to learn the secrets of the *Gbon* men's society. This made her a most powerful ruler. At last Gbeia Gbejua became advanced in age and was no longer able to lead war expeditions. When he returned home he found that Golo was master of the country. He loved her so much that he did everything to please her. He appointed his nephew, Zepe Dua, in his place as leader of war and ordered that all battles should be fought in the name of his wife who was ruler of the country. Thus the warriors were called *Golonyu* or "Golo's people," and soon all the people within her domain were known as *Golonyu*. Her fame spread far and wide.

But now her sister, Goa, had found favor with Zepe Dua, the nephew of Gbejua. They were married and soon Goa began to wish for as much fame and wealth as her sister. Before long there was bitterness between the twins. Constant differences began to arise between Dua and his uncle Gbejua. At last the hatred between the twins was so great it led Dua to rebel against his uncle and seize power from Goio. Unable to accept being ruled by a headstrong young man, Golo and Gbejua, followed by a few people, left the area for distant lands. Those who followed them were mockingly called "*golonyu*," meaning "the Crier's people." Goa and Dua began to name all the defeated peoples of their wars "*golonyu*" in order to embarrass Golo and her husband.

Goa became a greater and more powerful ruler than Golo had been. She traveled with her husband while he conquered new lands. All the people in the lands under her control she named "*Goanyu*," after herself. Soon she was ruler over a great territory which included even those lands to which Golo had fled. When Golo's husband Gbejua died, peace was at last made between the twins, Goa and Dua apologized for their treatment of her. Golo accepted the apology and had the body of her husband taken up and reburied so that there could be a great feast in honor of the renewed friendship.

When Golo died, Goa brought her body to the banks of the river near her own town and buried her according to the Sande society rules for great women. This brought upon her the wrath of the men's *Gbon* society because she had ignored the ceremonies necessary for the burial of one of its members, and she had not waited for her husband to return as was proper. A leader of the *Gbon* therefore organized a special society to take revenge upon Goa. When Dua heard of this he, too, organized a special society to retaliate. There was a great war between them and the destruction was great; but Zepe Dua was victorious. He was able to establish peace at home only by becoming the ruler, because there was now great fear that women over the land caused trouble. Many people fled to other lands.

(That is how women lost the right to rule over the land and to lead the *Gbon* society. From that time on the Gola have not wanted women to rule over them, though it sometimes happens. This is also how the Gola got their name. Those who followed Golo or who went away from the trouble are all the Gola of far countries; but those who remained with Goa are called Goa to this day.)

The last paragraph of comment in parentheses was an explanation offered by an elder of Kpo after the text had been read to him. With this addition it becomes a vivid example of the *kabande* form which would constitute the conventional mode of presentation. There was considerable interest aroused by this revival and interpretation of the legend, and many persons came to this old man to have him repeat it to them. Discussions took place as to whether or not “*gbele*” or “*gbli*” was the real name of Golo’s husband. *Kabande* after *kabande* was made of the legend providing commentaries on the fact that twins are powerful and dangerous, that kings destroy themselves by flaunting incest regulations, and men who let women control them lost all their wealth and prestige.

Gola knowledge of the past prior to the first known ancestors is extremely sparse and disinterested compared with the rich and hotly debated content of genealogical history. The above resume of specific information about the ancient distribution of the Gola approximates the limits of conceptualization about the far past and greatly exceeds the limits of active curiosity. There are two ways of looking at the world which existed prior to the known ancestors: one way accepts that this world and the primeval world were of two different orders (cf. d’Azevedo 1962). All manner of strange, remarkable and fantastic things may be attributed to the latter which might not be expected to occur in the present world. It was a timeless land of talking monsters and beasts who lived in societies like those of man and thought thoughts very much like man. The innumerable fables and myths of the Gola, which are called *dong*, describe the landscape and characters of this world. Its locus is not only that time beyond the memory of ancestors, but is also another dimension of the present accessible to man through dreams and special powers.

There is a way of looking at the world of the distant past, however, which is seldom confused with the *dong*. It is what may be called “*kabande* of history” with reference to what are considered to have been real people and real events. Though this is a mode of discourse particularly associated with the presentation of local genealogical and legendary information, it may be extended further back in time to include the meager data presumed to be the experience of the unknown Gola who were the “ancestors of the ancestors.” The distinction between the kind of information about the past having the quality of something which might actually have happened, and the kind of information that we of our culture might think of as mythological and fantastic is tacitly made. In all discussions and interviews with Gola elders about these matters, the present writer does not recall one instance where the tales of the type called *ma dong* were

brought to bear as "facts" concerning the past. Whenever they appeared in the context of a session concerned with "history," they were announced as digressions and identified as embellishments - for example, "I will now tell you *a dong* about this matter in the form of *kahande*," or "Here is *a say* (proverb) which makes the idea clear."

The story about Goa and Golo, which had been reintroduced among a group of elders of a town, was not taken as *dong* because it carried with it the prestige of having come from a "book" and was purported to be the statement of some very old people of Kpo kpa area. Furthermore it had about it a quality of probability in its naming of names, description of familiar relationships and feuds. It was immediately formed into *Kabande*, and its potential for providing an explanation for the origins of the Goa and Golo groups, and the differentiation of widespread Gola groups, was exploited. There was speculation as to where Golo and Gbele had gone to live when they fled from Dua, and as to whether these names could be ascribed to any old towns in the interior. This would not have been done with the content of a tale defined as *dong*, for such a tale is accepted as a fiction and its value lies in the timeless wisdom which can be interpreted from it. The story of Goa and Golo is an interesting border-line case. Had it been introduced by a professional storyteller it might very well have been regarded as *dong*. But appearing as it did within the context of a discussion of "history," and coming on the authority of the old people of Kpo kpa as recorded in a "book" by a Gola man, it was conceived as a description of events which might have actually happened.

This distinction between the "actual" and the "meaningful fantasy" is a difficult one for a member of a Western culture to make without doing violence to the special quality of Gola thought. Had Goa been described as a leopard or a water-spirit who later changed to a woman when Dua married her, the sense of "reality" or of "actual happenings" would not have been altered in the listeners. Such things *do* happen even in the present day. What matters are the conditions under which the information is presented - whether as "fact" validated by the assurance of old people, or whether as "just a story" intended to entertain, instruct or illustrate.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the remarkably rapid transmission of information considered to be portentous additions or revisions of historical knowledge, and by which a significant matter debated with special skill by the council of elders in one section is soon disseminated wholly or in part throughout the region. In the case of the resurrected tale from an elder of Po kpa section, the response it elicited many years later from an elder of the Kpo section was heard by me, in part or reinterpreted, within mere weeks during interview sessions in adjacent and distant chiefdoms. When asked about this, the answer was usually to the effect that what we had heard was the "real truth" (*tunyan*), or the "ancient Gola truth" (*goa gbli*) as confirmed in a "book." Therefore, it can be anticipated that future investigators among the Gola will confront even more elaborated references to *Goa* and *Gbli*, the migrations of "the Cryer's People," and the justifications for the exclusion of women from *Ghon*. I am confident that the

makers of history in the far-flung chiefdoms of the Gola and their immediate neighbors will have taken into their narratives all that they deem significant and useful.

By way of postscript the reader should be apprised of the fact that what was written above was presented as an invited paper in 1972. Fortunately, it was not submitted for publication allowing me now to present the following pertinent remarks. It was based on information garnered during ethnographic investigations during the 1950s and '60s, a relatively stable period in Liberian life and, for the Gola, it gave promise of some abatement of the turmoil of their recent past as well as improved relations with the Americo-Liberian government. Bomi Territory, encompassing most of the Lofa-Gola region occupied by them was finally incorporated as Bomi County in the new national county system and unification policy, actions celebrated by the Gola as long-awaited recognition and advancement of status. All predictions were that Liberia was on its way to longer overdue social reconstruction, especially with regards the assimilation and development of its tribal areas.

But such optimism - which I admittedly shared - was to be short-lived (cf. d'Azevedo 2000). Despite minimal reforms during the administration of William R. Tolbert, increasing civil unrest involving labor and taxation disputes culminated in the notorious "rice riots" of 1979 in which unarmed demonstrators were fired upon by police. A year later, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe and a group of indigenous men of the Liberian Armed Forces instigated a successful coup, overthrowing the Americo-Liberian dominated government, assassinating President Tolbert and executing thirteen officials of his regime by public firing squad. The constitution was suspended and all political activity banned under martial law. There followed a period of extreme brutality and lawlessness the likes of which Liberia had never before experienced. Five years later, an attempted coup by the popular Thomas Quiwonkpa failed, leaving in its wake massive reprisals and provoking renewed ethnic conflicts throughout the country. Then in 1989 Charles G. Taylor returned to Liberia from the United States to launch a civil war, further devastating the country, slaughtering Doe and his supporters, and establishing Taylor as the ruthless warlord dictator of a shattered nation. Declared President in 1997, he was eventually driven into exile by insurgent militias in 2003.

And, ironies of ironies, while in office he inserted into an ungainly full title the following names - President *Dakpanah* and Dr. Charles *Ghankay* Taylor, each representing a Gola high official of *Bon Poro*, a travesty bitterly noted by a people devastated by his actions and with whom he had made the questionable claim of a relationship through the maternal line. It is said that he will eventually have to deal not only with the nation at large but also with *Poro* because of his lies and deeds.

I review this sequence of events because, for the twenty-five years during which they occurred, the Gola area was overrun by armed gangs and rebel militias. The Bomi Road from Tubmanburg to Monrovia and the other road from Mecca to Monrovia were the only two motor roads in the northern part of the country, and they intersected all of the major Gola chiefdoms. Hundreds of villages were looted and burned

and the residents subjected to rape, torture and murder. Thousands of people fled into the bush or to the burgeoning refugee camps around Monrovia as Doe's feared and despised Krahn warriors, then the Gio and Mano supporters of Quiwonkpa, the Belle and Mandingo supporters of Taylor, and the various rebel bands rampaged along these roads pillaging as they went.

The social wounds are deep. Old inter-ethnic animosities have erupted into open hostility and acts of vengeance. Peoples such as the Gio, Mano, Krahn and Mandingo are said now to be expressing increasing hostility towards one another, while among the Gola to their west, who have suffered outrage from contingents of each group, the sense of unavenged humiliation is a canker that may never heal. When I was in Monrovia in 1997 and asked my Gola friends about these matters they could scarcely say the name of any of these tribes without suppressed fury. All had lost family and close friends or witnessed the desertion and destruction of their towns. Some were searching through refugee camps for survivors. Others were happy that a few members of their families had found refuge in the United States, though they were puzzled by what they felt was a strange pattern of disengagement concerning Liberian affairs, and that some professed no longer to be speaking Gola. I have since found this latter perception to be somewhat the case among Gola immigrants I know. Many have recoiled from traumatic experiences in Liberia and are determined not to return; they intend to bring up their children as Americans with little burden of horrific memories. A few say they plan to return to Liberia when they feel able to establish a satisfactory and productive life there.

So what has all this got to do with Gola history or an origin tale? Obviously I must think it very relevant because, despite the trauma of events like those described above, the urge to reconstruct a history seems to be sprouting here and there like seedlings through a parched earth. When I was in Liberia in the late 1990s, I was deluged with queries about the Gola past or specific genealogies very much as though I had become something of a quasi-elder. In fact, I am frequently told that because of my age I had outlived the elders of their families, many of whom had been killed during the wars. I had studied with their old people and was, therefore, their *kwi zubon* (elder from overseas). My limited responses to their questions were eagerly jotted down or reported to others. They were equally roused when informed of the reports on the Gola by Bai T. Moore (1955) and S. Jangaba M. Johnson (1962) published by the old Bureau of Folkways in the 1950s, and they wanted to know whether I had copies because most of the archives of the university and libraries had been looted!

More recently, here in the United States, I have received correspondence from a number of Gola immigrants requesting information about Gola history or specific family genealogies. One such letter from Morris Jenaka Thomas was for me particularly moving (letter to author, April 2005). It reads in part:

I hope your creator continues to keep you in good health until one of my communications reaches you. The fact is I have always pray and wish you long life.

...I was born in Bomi Territory, Zordee town in Klay District. I guess you can remember such names. I spend my early years in Bomi Territory but left the territory and never had the opportunity to go back. This separation from my country and culture cause me to miss out on the tradition and culture of my people. Moreover, the fourteen years of bloody civil war that effected Liberia destroyed cities, town, villages, churches and most all the culture and traditions that held us together has fallen apart. The elders/old folks are all dead.

I am afraid that I will be a lost person if I return to my people. I am very much interested to learn and know about my tribe. The elders that once held the traditional history together and were responsible to pass on the history to the younger generation are all dead as a direct result of the civil war. I have been searching for written materials or historical accounts about the Gola people of West Africa, Liberia. My late Uncle Chief Zokai Coleman introduced me to your name over eighteen years ago. He told me that an American name "Warren d'Azevedo" wrote an account about the Liberian Gola Tribe. Since then I have been in search to reach you.

My Internet search led me to the university of Nevada and... informed me that you have retired and now live in California.

In light of the above, I am writing to inquire and kindly request copies of your written accounts about the Gola Tribe of Liberia. Please affix your autograph on each copy. Also if you have knowledge about other accounts on the Gola Tribe, please refer me to it.

Of course I sent a box of reprints I could find and hope that this member of the surviving generation of history-makers will find in it shreds of what he is seeking. I am sure there are other examples of the alien ethnographer as a sanctioned source among a people studied, but for me it has been a gratifying experience providing some measure of assurance that my work may be appreciated and of use to those with whom I lived and observed. Yet it also underscores a basic theme of this discussion: The making of history by the Gola is a complex and compelling process by which a construction of the past amenable to a prior intent is essential for an individual's self-identity as well as a guide to successful action toward desired ends.

All history is hindsight, and despite all our efforts to free it from the warp of current perception it is nonetheless an invent on by resourceful minds of particular cultures, times, places and intentions. This is not to say that Gola constructs of the past are of the same order or intent as those of a modern Western historiographer, archeologist or jurist, for the former are clearly more involved with traditional congruencies and genealogical exigencies as the resource of candidly pragmatic goals. Moreover they

may be more susceptible to specious input or irrefutable assertions of the sort exemplified by an esteemed elder's pronouncement of "*goa gbli*" or the unquestioned certainty of "book." Such history is pliable and highly adaptable and the makers of history are under few constraints other than conventional models and the anticipated logistics of content. So when I state, as I have above, that future observers among the Gola "will confront even more elaborated references" to crucial aspects in narratives about their origin, or that I am confident that new makers of history will take into their own narratives "all that they deem significant and useful," I am now more confident than ever — though becoming more aware of how drastically circumstances have changed.

What will be the form and content of this reconstructed history? Now that a measure of peace has been restored in ravaged Liberia thousands of refugees are returning to their devastated villages; some even from abroad. A generation of time has passed with the loss of counseling elders and fractured family units must now resurrect not only homes and farms but the very fabric of a society as well. How this will be done and what will emerge from the miasma of two decades of carnage and plunder is a process I hope to live long enough to witness. What will be the destiny of that legendary pair Golo and Gbele [Gbli?], the attested messages from "book," the determined efforts of the new elders, and the presumably authoritative knowledge of their *Kwi* associates? What will be the ensuing *Goa Gbli*? Perhaps some intrigued young anthropologist will be moved to make this into a proposal for an ethnohistorical project. Or, perhaps, there will be time for a Post Postscript. Or yet another.

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# Assimilate and Be Ye Literate: A Critical Inquiry of the Lived Experiences of Liberian Students in a U.S. High School

*Richard de Gourville\**

## Introduction

The current influx of African students in the United States' (U.S.'s) school systems owes much to the proliferation of political and economic instability that had been sweeping the African continent during the past decade. The resulting civil wars and ethnic genocide had pushed millions of Africans out of their countries of origin and had driven them to seek refuge in neighboring countries and if fortunate, to be re-settled in Western countries such as the U.S. Liberia's unique historical relationship with the U.S. had resulted in a sympathetic yet politically cynical response from the latter in the form of "temporary protected status" for its endangered citizens. Coming in as refugee/immigrants under this fickle immigration provision, Liberian students and their families were expected to assimilate into the academic and social cultures of the American urban school. Lack of accurate socio-cultural knowledge of Liberian/African students, unfamiliarity with their educational system and its rigorous demands, and Western-centric assumptions about their language and literacy skills, had converged to create conditions for their academic and social failure in America's educational institutions. As speakers of a World English i.e. Liberian English, many (not all) of these students have also experienced the bewildering American practice of being evaluated for English language competence and proficiency in reading and writing and subsequently placed in ESL programs where their supposed language/literacy related deficiencies would be addressed. In addition, their "cold" reception by their American peers in the school system had engendered an uncomfortable and stressful social climate for them to negotiate and resulted in the formation of strong oppositional identities on the part of the Liberian students and a concomitant ambivalence regarding their identification with, as well as participation in, specific forms of American popular culture. Thus, through a "critical" examination of the discourses of language/literacy and assimilation, I will attempt to unmask certain unequal relationships of power that served to position Liberian students for social and academic failure in U.S. schools.

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### Review of the Related Literature

Given the relatively recent presence of African refugee/immigrant students in U.S. schools, a phenomenon largely driven by political instability and civil war in both sub-Saharan and Western Africa, it was not surprising to discover that there existed a paucity of research in the area. Although the major electronic databases on education, sociology, and anthropology produced little of substance, there were however, several anthropological studies conducted on the country of Liberia from the 1960s to the early 1980s (Liebenow, 1969; Lowenkopf, 1976; and Gershoni, 1985) that allowed me to construct a skeletal framework for the cultural, social, and educational contexts of Liberian children.

In order to understand the potential problems of language and literacy related to the students' use of Liberian English, I critically reviewed the "dialect/Creole" debate (Rickford, 1999; Mufwene et al., 1998; Smitherman, 1977; Winford, 1992; and Singler, 1981) but paid considerable attention to the Creolist position that affirmed my position that Liberian English was a unique language and not a dialect.

Finally, my searches of the websites of the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, enabled me to understand shifts in U.S. immigration policy that had maintained Liberian refugee/immigrant students and their families in a state of "in-betweenity" [?] referred to as "temporary protected status" or "delayed enforced departure." With respect to the political designations of "refugee" and "immigrant" that emerged from the literature review, I later combined them to illustrate the fluidity of Liberian students' political and social identities.

### Study site, participants, collection and methodology

This study took place in Constitution City, a major urban metropolis in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. The study was conducted in two phases: (1) a pilot study and (2) a main study. For the pilot study phase that began in March 2000, six community "experts" were identified by other Liberian community members as being knowledgeable about the problems facing the Liberian community in Constitution City and were subsequently interviewed very broadly about concerns/issues that were impacting their community. Not surprisingly, the educational problems experienced by their children in the U.S. school system, emerged as the most important concern. These concerns included disruptions in their children's education due to the Liberian civil war, inability to keep up academically with their American peers and inappropriate grade placement. In addition, a parental questionnaire was administered to Liberian parents with children attending schools in the Constitution School District.

Parents' responses did confirm the view of community participants that the educational issue was a major preoccupation with the Liberian community. For the main part of the study, on-site observations and interviews with students, teachers, and select school personnel occurred in October 2000 at Cooley High School (CHS), a

school located in an economically and socially distressed neighborhood in southwest Constitution City. This particular high school was selected because of its high concentration of Liberian refugee/immigrant students. Consistent with the study's phenomenological orientation, interviews were conducted with a group of nine mixed gender Liberian students, of which seven were successfully transcribed; five ESOL teachers, one ESOL support staff, and one non-teaching assistant. Other forms of data included field notes from formal classroom observations and my informal observations in the ESOL Center, cafeteria, and hallways. As a "critical" qualitative inquiry (Carspecken, 1996), this study attempted to utilize a postmodern critical theoretical framework; in particular, discourse, power and pedagogical theories, to analyze and illuminate the "lived experiences" of a group of English-speaking West African refugee/immigrant students in a U.S. high school.

### **Discourses of Schooling**

The phenomenon of English speaking West African refugee/immigrant students being identified and placed in the ESOL program at CHS, could best be explained through our recourse to discourse and power theory. In this regard, Foucault's (1972) theory of "discourse" adds considerable insight into the manner in which the "subject" (e.g. Africans, refugee/immigrants, or English language learners) become a constructed Other. For Foucault (1972), discourse represented a group of statements, which provide a language for talking about a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. (Hall, 1997, p. 44)

Discourse, according to Foucault, is what defines and constructs the objects of our knowledge, whether these objects were topics, events, or people. Discourse, therefore, involved the production of knowledge through language and practice. Thus, for Foucault, the "subject" was both historically and socially produced, i.e. it was the product of specific historical and social formations. Within the U.S. urban public school, certain discourses occur that tend to unfairly place limits on the intelligence, social status, cultural backgrounds, and language/literacy of English language learners. It was at the intersections of these sites that the dominant language, i.e. Standard American English (or SAE) often functioned to marginalize, de-legitimize, and de-stabilize the multiple identities that constituted Liberian students' lived experiences in the public school. In seeking to counteract these dominant discourses of schooling, it would be necessary to expose some of the "common sense" assumptions that members of the dominant SAE-speaking cultural group make about second language learners generally, and World English speakers in particular. Such a critique would enable us to understand and work against often "invisible" social structures that limit the potential of such students to excel academically, socially, and culturally within a White-dominated society.

### The Discourse of Assimilation

Historically, the American public school has played a major role in assimilating successive waves of immigrant children from many parts of the world. In its assimilative function, the urban public school has operated in unrelenting fashion to reduce, if not eliminate, the languages, cultures, histories, and identities of its immigrant/refugee students to a monolingual and monocultural "American" identity. However, while some ethnic groups have been more readily apt to conform to the expectations of the American school, other groups such as the Liberian refugee/immigrant students at CHS have developed an oppositional identity and have tended to maintain a strong ethnic identification.

By comparison to some other ethnic groups, Liberian refugee/immigrant students have certainly seemed particularly resistant to the assimilative discourse of the American public school. One possible reason is that despite their shared history with African-Americans, whose ancestors founded the free Black nation of Liberia on African soil, as well as a shared African ethnicity, Liberian students have experienced a very cold and often hostile reception from their African-American peers in the U.S. urban school. This unexpected rejection by a majority of their African-American "cousins" has therefore led to a "siege-like" mentality among the Liberian students and the subsequent segregation of both ethnic groups within common public spaces in the school (e.g., cafeteria, gymnasium, classrooms, library, and hallways). In addition, the tensions and suspicions that existed between both ethnic groups has been complicated by the fact that African-American students represented an oppositional culture that often frustrated and contradicted the urban school's assimilative and social control mission. While such oppositional behavior was accepted as the "norm" for urban African-American students, teachers and other social control agents at CHS often attempted to restrict their Liberian students' identities to roles of passivity and conformity. Consequently, teachers and other social control agents regarded the Liberian students more negatively when they acted up or acted out since such negative behavior was reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of the dominant ethnic group in the school (i.e., African-Americans). As Africans, the Liberian students' school identities had therefore been limited to an "essential-ized" African school identity that was fixed and unitary. Such a "normalized" African identity had undoubtedly positioned Liberian students in specific unequal relationships of power with both the dominant school culture and the dominant subordinate cultural group (i.e., African-American) in the school.

At CHS, Liberian students tended to resist the assimilative discourse of the American school in several distinct ways. Firstly, through their use of Liberian English as a marker of ethnic and cultural identity, Liberian students challenged the dominance of Standard American English as the "official" school language as well as African American Vernacular English as the language of social currency in the school. Despite their eagerness to be accepted by the dominant sub-cultural group i.e. African Americans, Liberian students had "come to know" that their marginalization in the school was

directly connected to their distinctive Africanized English, African culture, and African ethnicity. As a counter response, they attached great loyalty to their use of Liberian English as a marker of their "African-ness." Haiwa, an 18 year-old tenth grader, confirmed a clear linkage between her maintenance of an African identity and her use of Liberian English in the following manner:

Richard: If you try to be "American," would your life (here at CHS) be easier?

Haiwa: I have to act like ... be like African and it will be easier for me. For me, I'm not anyone else. I speak my raw English so they can know I'm an African.

Richard: So, you speak your Liberian English?

Haiwa: So they can know I came from Africa.

(Interview with Haiwa, December 11, 2000)

For Haiwa, as well as several others, the legitimization of and use of their primary language was non-negotiable since Liberian English was the marker that they used to distinguish themselves from all persons "American."

Ethnic group solidarity was also fostered through their adherence and loyalty to a Liberian English-only speaking strategy. Thus, for Liberian students, struggles over identity were also struggles over which "ideological sign" (Volosinov, 1973) they chose to legitimize. However, in the postmodern world of floating signifiers, notions such as a fixed and stable cultural/ethnic identity must be constantly challenged and critiqued in order to more fully describe the complexity and contradictions of our students' lives. While there were clearly Liberian students who refused to appropriate either of the two dominant ideological sign systems in the urban school (i.e. SAE or AAVE), there was also another group of such students who made accommodations in their speech when in the presence of SAE-speaking authority figures or AAVE-speaking peers.

As distinct from the "non-conformist" group who made no concessions in their speech towards speakers from either the dominant cultural group or the dominant sub-cultural group, the "accommodationists" would often tend to alter their speech i.e. Liberian English, depending on the communicative context in which they found themselves. For example, in attempting to facilitate understanding between their SAE speaking administrators and school personnel, or with their AAVE-speaking African American peers, the accommodationist group preferred to employ a "code-switching" strategy. Nancy, a 17 year-old, eleventh grader explained her strategic use of both SAE and AAVE in the following manner:

Richard: So, if you were talking to Mrs. M., the principal, would you speak to her in Liberian English or would you try to speak some other kind [She cuts me off].]

Nancy: Because when you try to speak ...

Richard: [I finish my sentence] of Standard English ...?

Nancy: Because when you try to speak ... when you try to speak Liberian English, they'll say, "I don't get what you trying to say." So, you're trying hard to speak the American English so she should get what you have to say.

Richard: And so, what about if you were with ... African American ... a whole class of African American students ... you were the only Liberian, would you alter your speech?

Nancy: [She laughs.] Yeah.

(Interview with Nancy, November 29, 2000)

Nancy's greater level of meta-linguistic awareness, as well as her linguistic pragmatism, had predisposed her to use SAE strategically. Not only did she demonstrate an awareness of the different linguistic codes in operation in the school (i.e. AAVE and SAE), but she also understood the practicality of knowing how to manipulate these codes in her cross-cultural communicative interactions.

In yet another interesting communicative scenario, Yeadae, a sixteen-year old ninth grader, made no obvious attempt to "code-switch" in the presence of SAE-speaking adults but intentionally chose to do so in her communications with her African American peers. Her communicative intent was quite clear from the following discussion:

Richard: When you talk to your "American" teachers ... Do you talk to them in Liberian English or do you use maybe ... "American English?"

Yeadae: Liberian English.

Richard: What about if you talk to American students, what language do you talk to them in?

Yeadae: In the American English. They will not understand the Liberian English.

(Interview with Yeadae, November 30, 2000)

Apart from these linguistic examples, the resistance of Liberian students to the assimilative discourse of the American urban school was also in evidence through their ambivalent consumption of specific cultural products from American urban popular culture. For African-American youth, expressing one's individuality as well as displaying loyalty to one's social group identity was exemplified in their attention to the latest fashions of urban popular culture. Wearing the right brand-name clothes, shoes, headgear, and jewelry was indicative not only of their flair for creative expression but also of a Black urban identity. "Admission rights" often depended on how well students from the out-group could mimic urban fashions of the in-group. For Liberian students unaccustomed to a non-uniform wearing school culture, however, the meanings that they constructed about American schooling and its value were often extremely negative. Many of them considered the non-uniform wearing school culture as an economic burden that taxed the financial resources of themselves and their parents. Haiwa, for example, decried the excessive costs she incurred in keeping socially trendy:

Richard: So, do you find yourself buying lots of clothes here?

Haiwa: Yeah. Too much expensive clothes. Every day, you have to change. You will not wear them over and over to school. Wear clothes for one week [She means everyday] will not "look good."

(Interview with Haiwa, December 11, 2000)

As could be deduced from this brief exchange, peer pressure operating through the *discourse of dress*, positioned newcomers i.e. refugee/immigrant students, in unequal relationships of power with the dominant sub-cultural group i.e. African Americans. From Haiwa's perspective, the notion of "looking good," had more to do with how others perceived her and about the social consequences of violating the unofficial dress code. Haiwa noted however, that in Liberia, students did not pay attention to their fellow students' style of dress since they were required to wear uniforms to school. Nancy, on the other hand argued for a school uniform policy that would diminish the "markings of difference" among students. Nancy believed that the school's adoption of a uniform policy would greatly reduce teasing and other forms of symbolic violence perpetrated against those who refuse to dress "American." She articulated her position in the following manner:

Nancy: I think if both of you wear the same thing, there is nobody here will laugh at you. If you wear different things that's not appropriate for the school, well, then people start laughing at you. If both of you wear the same thing, then nobody laugh at you.

Richard: That is, if everybody wear uniform?

Nancy: Yeah. Then nobody will get chance to laugh at your friends.

(Interview with Nancy, November 29, 2000)

From Nancy's suggestion it was clear that the resolution of the unequal social relationships that existed between them as outsiders and the African American students as the insider group, lay in the imposition of a system-wide school uniform policy. As an institutional symbol, the wearing of the school uniform in Liberia had signified both a financial and affective investment in schooling and that the wearer was subsequently a member of a privileged social group. According to Bourdieu's (1977) theory of "symbolic power," all symbolic systems possessed power since they represented ways of ordering and understanding the world. Thus, in Liberia, the school uniform as a symbol functioned to control access to Western knowledge and was wielded as an instrument of social control by school authorities. It was therefore not surprising that several Liberian students equated the non-wearing of school uniforms in U.S. public schools with a lack of discipline and a lack of an equivalent affective investment in education.

### The Discourse of Language/Literacy

Closely aligned with the discourse of assimilation, was that of language/literacy. It was no coincidence that these English-speaking Liberian students were placed in the

ESOL program at CHS. The discourse surrounding language/literacy in the U.S. urban school often influenced its' gatekeepers to make assumptions about refugee/immigrants' language/literacy based on accent, country of origin, and knowledge of conditions precipitating immigration to the U.S. (e.g. civil wars in Africa). For many American teachers, the notion of literacy encompassed primarily its "functional" aspect i.e. the ability to read, write, and perform basic computational tasks. This formal or school-based literacy was grounded in a Western-centric paradigm that viewed literacy as "universal" and "culture-neutral," and which completely ignored other equally important "literacies" that Liberian refugee/immigrant students brought to the learning situation. Such an ideology carried the potential for undermining the development of the very school-based literacy that American teachers sought to impart to their African students. Teacher Sam, the coordinator of the ESOL program at CHS, readily admitted to the apparent contradiction of providing ESOL services to students whose native language was English but who were judged as lacking the basic skills to succeed in mainstream classes. This teacher's response provided some insight into the dilemma ESL teachers faced in their efforts to address the language and literacy needs of World English students:

ability to read and to do basic skills. It's been difficult trying to separate because, since they speak English, it's always been kind of contradictory to put them in the ESOL program.

(Interview with Teacher Sam, December 21, 2000)

From Teacher Sam's response, it was clear that a functionalist perspective of literacy permeated not only his own beliefs and practices as an ESL teacher but also the philosophy of the ESOL department at CHS.

However, the functionalist perspective left unexamined other legitimate forms of literacy brought to the learning situation by the Liberian students. These unrecognized forms of literacy were highly valued by the ethnic communities from which these students came and were thought to be indispensable to their academic and social success in their schools and indigenous communities. These "indigenous" resources, referred by Semali and Kincheloe (1999) as "indigenous knowledge," were important for students' understanding of themselves and the world around them. Such knowledge enabled them to organize their worldview and enhance their lives. This unique "way of knowing," as described by Semali and Kincheloe,

Reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives. (p. 3)

Such "indigenous knowledge," represented the foundation upon which indigenous students' literacies were built. In piecing together the various kinds of indigenous knowledge that Liberian students brought to the American school and classroom environ-



ments, I argue that, in isolation, these kinds of knowledge do not constitute literacy but became relevant only as Liberian students attempted to use them in various communicative contexts to explore and make sense of their new socio-cultural surroundings. In my research with the Liberian students at CHS, I was able to identify several elements of their indigenous knowledge system that for the most part, entered into conflict with the distinctly Anglo-European codes of the American urban school juxtaposed with an urban "code of the street" (Anderson, 1999). The following cultural literacies were identified and will be briefly discussed below: (1) respect, (2) self-control, (3) valuing of education, (4) moral/religious orientation, and (5) cooperation and connectedness.

Coming from a hierarchical African cultural context that venerated the elders and those in authority, Liberian students had been socialized into respecting the authoritarian role of the teacher. In the African educational system, respect for the teacher was an indispensable element in the learning process. In many African societies, the teacher was a revered and respected representative of the community. She was the bearer of knowledge as well as the repository of the community's values, beliefs, and traditions. The African teacher was able to command great respect in her community, in part, because of the high value placed on her knowledge, not just about subject matter but also about life in general. In their comments about the Liberian system of school discipline, most of the students I interviewed emphasized the importance of respecting the teacher. Consequences could be serious and often humiliating for students attempting to disrespect the African teacher as Haiwa, an 18-year-old tenth grader explained:

Like when you disrespect the teacher, the teacher would walk over to your parents' house ... Walk over to your parents' house and let your parents know. When your parents do not like the idea, the parents would walk over to the school in [unrecognizable] and tell the teacher to beat you in front of your friends dem.

(Interview with Haiwa, December 11, 2000)

Thus, it could be seen that in the Liberian school system, discipline was upheld through the cooperative efforts of parents and teachers in which the former "lent" their authority to the latter. Unfortunately, in the American educational context, Liberian students constructed contradictory messages about what constituted respect for the teacher. The apparent permissiveness and lack of respect for teacher authority observed by many immigrant/refugee students (Suarez-Orosco, 1989) was often construed as an absence of rules for regulating student conduct. Nancy, a 17-year-old eleventh grader, testified eloquently to this misperception in comparing the Liberian mechanisms of classroom control with those in American schools:

We were very strict. Everybody go by the rules. So here the children ... because they think they're here in America (i.e. the American students) so they

don't have to go by the rules. They do whatever they want.

(Interview with Nancy, November 29, 2000)

Consequently, Liberian students perceived the American school as one in which rules governing students' behavior were either ineffective or absent and that students were allowed to act irresponsibly. However, such a "misreading" of the American educational system's approach to discipline and its often subtle mechanisms of social control often led Liberian students to come into conflict with the school's disciplinary system.

Self-control was yet another "cultural literacy" often closely aligned with a motivation to learn. Consistent with this objective, schools are very preoccupied with requiring that students learn how to control their often-impulsive urges. In the American school system, enforcing socially acceptable behaviors is generally accomplished through an elaborate system of rewards and sanctions. Thus, it could be asserted that American students were controlled through extrinsic forms of motivation since it was the promise of the reward that often positively shaped the desired behavior. Although Liberian students were also similarly motivated i.e. extrinsically, it was usually the threat of punishment, as well as exposure to shame and embarrassment that often operated as powerful internal regulators to dissuade them from acting in socially inappropriate ways. Having become familiar with the American school's approach to discipline, many Liberian students and parents have expressed their dissatisfaction with a system that is perceived to be overly permissive and out of control. Liberian students often "read" the absence of corporal punishment by American teachers as indicative of a weak disciplinary system. In the Liberian educational system, students were accustomed to clear and expeditious disciplinary procedures that included corporal punishment amongst other sanctions e.g. teacher warnings, teacher-parent conferences, suspensions and even dismissals. In their interviews, several of the ESOL teachers mentioned that inappropriate behavior and "acting out" among Liberian students had affected their classroom control. I would contend that these behaviors were not considered the norm in Liberian schools or households, and would be severely dealt with by authority figures. During my observations in the "sheltered English" classrooms at CHS, Liberian females were involved in the most serious cases of classroom disruption and also the most violent. In the most serious situation, two Liberian females accused two African males (not Liberian) of sexual harassment and proceeded to engage in a vicious fistfight with the offending young men. Thankfully, I was able to assist in separating both parties before any serious injury was done. Certainly, in the area of female aggression in urban schools, more research needs to be done.

Liberian students' strong faith in education as a means of personal empowerment and self-advancement was yet another major "indigenous literacy" that surfaced during my study. This theme emerged from the opinions expressed by several of the students as they compared the heavy financial costs involved in obtaining an education in Liberia as opposed to the "free" education offered to all students in the American

public school system. Implicit in many of these statements was the notion that American students, especially African Americans, did not place a significant value on education as a free public commodity. Ainsworth, a 19-year-old twelfth grader, stressed the importance of students' responsibility towards their parents in diligently applying themselves to the task of learning. In Liberian culture, respect for teachers was synonymous with respect for education. As Ainsworth explained,

We do respect the kinda education we wanna take like ... because your parent have to pay money for you to go to school [in Liberia] ... So you have to take school to be very important because your parents suffer a lot to get that money to pay for you to go to school. So, you have to take your education important and you have to do whatever you have to do to make sure you pass (i.e. your examinations) ... You can't play around.

(Interview with Ainsworth, December 18, 2000)

The notion of Liberian parents "suffering" (i.e., making financial sacrifices) to ensure that their children received a proper education, was a common attitude expressed by Liberian students since this sacrifice had provided them with the motivation and drive to succeed in their school endeavors. In Liberia where poverty (i.e. the lack of an accumulated capital) was a persistent challenge and access to education was restricted, those students fortunate enough to attend school were expected to work hard and be successful. In doing so, they, in effect, "repaid" their parents for the economic hardships and personal sacrifices they had made in securing for them the benefits of an education.

Given Liberia's long history of affiliating its' educational system with denominational organizations, it was not surprising to find that Liberian students possessed a strong moral/religious orientation. Unlike many Western societies where the goal was directed towards pragmatic ends, i.e., securing a job and other materialistic pursuits, there was a strong belief in Liberian society that a primary goal of education should be the development of character. As a deeply spiritual people, they believed that the inculcation of moral values in children should be accorded a high priority in the educational system. Students were not just expected to be "educated for a living" but also to be "educated for life" (Mosha, 1999, p.216). While the former implied the acquisition of information, skills, and techniques essential to making a living, the latter, was intended to mold the "innermost core of a person" (Mosha, 1999, p.217) i.e. to provide spiritual and moral formation. However, in their transition from a highly religious educational culture to one that was dominated by the tenets of secular humanism Liberian students often encountered a confusing array of signals about the value of their moral/spiritual beliefs. From an African indigenous worldview, "Knowing, living, and acting ethically and morally" were essential elements of life (Mosha, 1999, p. 210). Whereas certain disciplinary infractions in the American school seemed to carry clear consequences (e.g. suspensions for fighting), those that fell into the "moral"

realm appeared far less clear (e.g. lying, cheating, stealing, using profanity or disrespecting others). When asked to define a “good student,” Yeadae, a 16-year-old ninth grader, described the “good student” as someone who had the dual responsibility of “paying attention” to the teacher and being “well-behaved.” as she offered the following opinion:

You can [She means can't] be bad. The teacher is teaching, you pay attention. Don't behave badly.

(Interview with Yeadae, November 30, 2000)

In most cases, students identified with the moral dimensions of the word “good” instead of merely the technical aspects such as being competent in a specific task. These and similar statements made by the Liberian students support my contention that education was primarily conceived of as a “moral” enterprise that was intended to develop “good” character in students. I suspect that much of the “moral” confusion faced by Liberian students in highly secular American public schools, stemmed from an absence of a vibrant moral/ethical school culture that consistently promotes and defends the values deemed indispensable to a civil community. The final set of indigenious literacies that were identified among Liberian students was that of cooperation and connectedness. As Africans, the Liberian students' connected with their community could be observed in their social interactions with each other or with other Africans. For example, many Liberian students were attracted to CHS because a sizable Liberian population had already concentrated there. Many students enrolled at this high school and remained there because of family or kinship connections. Nancy, for example, who had reported no major problems in reading and writing (a criteria for placement in the ESOL program), when asked about her presence in the program, frankly stated that she opted to remain in the ESOL program to support her cousins in their learning. Her characteristic unselfishness and generosity in regard to her relatives' needs emerged in her explanation:

Because when I came first ... the [unrecognizable] was solely Liberians, so I was the only one ... among my family ... the only one, so I have to be with them to help them, so I have to stick with them.

(Interview with Nancy, November 29, 2000)

At an earlier juncture in our interview, Nancy alluded to the African spirit when comparing her school life in Liberia to her current life in the U.S. She associated her enjoyment of school life in Liberia with the fact that the educational system was cooperative rather than competitive:

Back then, going to school was fun because everybody is the same as you have here, and they can help you with anything that you want. Like a chore? ... But not here.

(Interview with Nancy, November 29, 2000)

Nancy's insightful comments about the cooperative aspects of her culture stood in stark contrast to the individualistic and alienating nature of the American school climate. Research conducted on the relational aspect of language in minority students' lives confirmed the importance of relationships to their academic and social success in the American public school (Hale, 1986; Daniel-Tatum, 1997; Nieto, 1998; and Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). In his suggestion for teachers to make the learning experiences of Liberian students more successful, Soulemane, an 18-year-old eleventh grader, strongly emphasized group work or cooperative learning. His enthusiasm for group work underscored the need that many minority students have for a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Soulemane expressed this relational desire in the following exchange:

Richard: What kinds of things do you think teachers can do to make your learning experience more successful?

Soulemane: Group work would be excellent.

Richard: So, group work?

Soulemane: Yes. I really [he stresses 'really'] am interested in group work.

(Interview with Soulemane, November 28, 2000)

From Soulemane's comments as well as others, it was obvious that notions of sharing and cooperation (relational learning) was deeply embedded in the indigenous knowledge structures of Liberian students and that African patterns of child socialization, favored working towards the "common good" of the family, kinship group, and community as opposed to the Western pattern of individual gratification and achievement.

## Conclusion

In critically examining these "discourses of power" that have unfairly "punished" African refugee/immigrant students in U.S. schools and classrooms, it was clear that these students were caught in a double bind. On the one hand, American school culture expected Liberian students to assimilate to "American" norms of behavior and thinking, while on the other hand, powerful discourses such as those of assimilation and literacy, tended to isolate and restrict them from such assimilation. By not understanding literacy to be a culture-specific phenomenon, American teachers had overlooked or diminished the value of certain cultural literacies that were foundational to both the academic and social success of Liberian students. In the American school, Liberian students had constructed very different messages regarding the worth of their indigenous literacies, and consequently exhibited symptoms of alienation and frustration. In addressing the language/literacy needs of their Liberian refugee/immigrant students, American teachers will therefore need to develop a culturally-relevant pedagogy that values and incorporates their students' unique ways of knowing into the "official" curriculum in order to enhance their chances for success.

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## Fatimata Massaquoi Fahnbulleh Pioneer Woman Educator, 1912-1978

*Raymond J. Smyke\**

Known all of her life as Fatima, later “Madam”, she was among the most influential indigenous women in mid - twentieth century Liberia. On the faculty of the University of Liberia from 1947 until her retirement in 1972, she taught in almost every department. In 1956 she became Director, and four years later, Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. She also founded and served as Director of the Institute of African Studies. A creative person, she authored a number of books, on Liberian culture, wrote a historical drama to celebrate the University’s centennary, helped to found the Society of Liberian Authors and made a significant contribution to the standardization of the Vai script. In addition to an honorary doctorate from her University, she received a number of foreign honors.

Five years after the change of government in Liberia, one begins to lose touch with the ‘way it was’. The period between the two World Wars was difficult for educated women. But, for an educated indigenous woman it was doubly so. Fatima had some advantages: family pride, brain power, languages and tenacity, yet the frustrations took a toll. Her father, Momolu Massaquoi (1870 - 1938), served as Liberia’s first Consul General to Germany from 1922 until 1929, when he returned to Monrovia to contest the Presidency. Her mother was Madam Massa Balo Sonjo from Bandajuma in Barri Chiefdom, Sierra Leone. Madam Massa was the last of the five dowered women or traditional wives, with whom Momolu had children.<sup>1</sup> We are informed of her childhood years because Fatima was a gifted communicator, with a powerful sense of recall. Before the age of forty she wrote an autobiography. A steady correspondent, with a large number of people she had the habit of saving all of her letters.<sup>2</sup>

Fatima made several important contributions to Liberian historiography. She left a detailed, personal record, covering a significant period of time, viewed through the eyes of an indigenous person. She also served as a mentor for several generations of young indigenous boys and girls striving for education, understanding, and equality in Liberia. Like her brother Nathaniel, who had a distinguished career in national and international public service<sup>3</sup>, she was gifted in languages - Vai, Mende, English, German, French, Italian, plus many years of Latin and Greek at school. Her father had laid

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out a program of education from the moment she was born. Later, he even chose a university for her to attend in the United States. Fatima graduated B.A. in Sociology from Lane College in 1938; M.A. in Sociology and Anthropology from Fisk University in 1940. She completed the requirements for a Ph.D. in Social Studies at Boston University but never submitted the dissertation. She had earned her own way by teaching French at Lane, while at Fisk, Momolu's old friend W.E.B. DuBois looked after her. There, she taught folk dancing, assisted with organizing the African Studies Program, compiled a Vai dictionary with Prof. Mark Hanna Watkins and taught at a settlement house. Short of money, just before he died, Momolu did what he could. He sent his daughter quantities of Liberian artifacts, including masks, cloth, ivory and the like. To support herself, she would lecture on Liberia at churches and schools in the South, and sell these things after the lectures. A half century before, this is exactly how Momolu earned his way through Central Tennessee College. His mother, Queen Sandimannie, arranged to send cases of what must have been extremely valuable Liberian artificats which he sold on lecture tours throughout the South.<sup>4</sup>

Her life had several significant influences. As a child she lived at her birth place, Njagbacca, Gawula District, Grand Cape Mount County with Momolu's sister, Mama Jassa, then the oldest member of the Massaquoi clan. Fatima spent seven years with her. It was a two-way arrangement. She was placed there, as was the custom, for early formation. As Mama Jassa aged and became forgetful, it was Fatima's task to remind her where she left things - glasses, keys and the like, but also to whom she loaned household items. Fatima learned a great deal from the old woman, including a lifelong respect for traditional and herbal medicine. She recalled the sad farewell, when Momolu came to take her to school, knowing she would never see Mama Jassa again.

She began in an elementary school organized by Cheeseman Grimes, then went to Julia C. Emery Hall at Bromley Mission, from there to schools in Germany where she ultimately earned the Arbitur.

**The Influence of Family<sup>5</sup>**

Momolu had five wives by traditional marriages, and one "official" marriage in 1915 to Rachel Johnson. In addition to the children from these marriages, he had sired several others, most of whom made up the Massaquoi family which he looked after throughout his life. A list of those considered family who survived to adulthood follows:

	BIRTH	NAME	OCCUPATION
1.	1897	AlHaj	Enemy property custodian WW I, Tubman administration, business.
2.	?	Jaiah	Interior Department, D.C., Chief Government Surveyor.
3.	1897	Manna	Left for Nigeria 1919, retired and pensioned as marine engineer.



4.	?	Jawa	Revenue agent Interior Department, Bong Mine.
5.	1903	Bei James	Firestone, pensioned.
6.	1905	Abraham	Commissioner of Maritime Affairs.
7.	1905	Nathaniel	Director of Education; first African on the Executive Board of UNESCO.
8.	1910	Ciaka Sam	Bong Mine; Sierra Leone.
9.	1912	Fatima	University of Liberia, pensioned.
10.	1921	Arthur	Director Bureau of Mines.
11.	1926	Fritz	Lamco.
12.	1928	Fasia	Lamco.

These people never lived together, under the same roof, but there was constant communication among them. This was done in the traditional Liberian way of travelers carrying a message, occasional letters and visits. But primarily, it was Momolu seeing that everyone was informed of family matters. He was an indulgent father, spending much time with each one. While trading in Sierra Leone, and later traveling for the Liberian Department of Interior to the hinterland, he always took, some of the children with him, on trek. Like a large family anywhere, he loved them all, but still had favorites. In the listing above, it is clear that Fatima is the only daughter around during his prime years. By the time Fasima and Fritz were born he was in his late fifties. Although having these babies around the house invigorated his manhood, he was simply too preoccupied with political events at home and the end of his career in Hamburg, to give them much of himself. "Baby" Arthur, born shortly after they arrived in Germany was a great favorite. At the time, some of the older boys were giving him trouble. Getting involved with the police for pranks, failing in school, "sassing" him and the like. It must have been a relief to be able to play with Arthur as he was learning to walk and then starting school. But his connection with Fatima was different. On meeting Fatima for the first time at the home of her mother, he said in Mende, "so this is my daughter and mother."<sup>6</sup>

Momolu's own childhood was spent under the eye of an indulgent mother, Queen Sandimanie. She was a powerful woman in her own right. In addition to the stories that Momolu told of his mother, there is ample documentation on her from other sources, all testifying to her greatness.<sup>7</sup> The theme of his mother runs all through his life, often mentioned in private correspondence and in public speeches. For example, at the age of nineteen he addressed the annual meeting of the National Education Association of the United States, at its first international conference, July 1891, in Toronto, Canada. There, he paid her an unusual tribute.<sup>8</sup> He had the annoying habit of holding up his Queen mother for others to emulate, particularly Fatima. He mentions it often in letters to her. He did the same thing to his wife, Ma Sedia, while they lived in Germany, but the admonition fell on deaf ears. She was a strong person and did not need to emulate anyone.<sup>9</sup> Beginning at a very impressionable age, his mother

became the model for Fatima. Indeed, from the pattern and frequency of reference, it appears that he truly believed Fatima was his mother returned to earth to be with him. An extremely difficult burden for a child to carry! She tried to excell in everything in order to please him. He, in turn, placed all of his hope, and much of his trust on her. He spent a good deal of money to ensure that she had the finest education available. Fatima was favored more than the other children.

A typical exchange of correspondence, in 1928, went like this. He congratulated her for being 10th in her class, "but before you leave that class you must be the *first*. *First* was always my place in every class I have ever entered and post I have ever occupied. God bless you and give you the will to reach the top. Don't think of failing - hundreds, yea thousands are looking upon you." Her reply, "My darling papa.... You need not worry about my doing anything which I know will not please you. I will make you happy in your old age, that you can rely upon". Perhaps he showered this love and affection on her because she was the only girl. But his belief in the connection between his mother and Fatima gave it all another dimension. I believe that he was trying to show the whole world, but particularly the Americo - Liberian community, that an indigenous person could rise to any heights, given an equal opportunity in life. When he returned to Liberia, after the German assignment, he was chagrined that he could not support her financially, yet he continued to shower her with advice, up until several days before he died. Her brothers showed little or no jealousy at all. They were most supportive of her, particularly AlHaj, the oldest. After Momolu died, Ciaka continued to send her Liberian artifacts. Nathaniel and Fatima grew up together, and probably had the longest direct contact with Momolu. They both benefited from, and excelled in, their German education and remained lifelong and close friends, each involved in Liberian education. Nathaniel's mother, Julia Cecilia Harris,<sup>10</sup> was the woman in the family closest to her. Not surprisingly, her marriage to Earnest Ballah Fahnbulleh, on 26 July 1948, did not endure. If her hero was Momolu, then probably not many men could live up to his image.

The family therefore was very close, animated by Momolu during his good years. After his fruitless effort for the Presidency, the victor, Edwin Barclay, began a campaign of victimization against Momolu that aimed to crush his great spirit. It lasted up to the day that he died, indeed, reaching beyond the grave, as will be noted later. These years, from 1931 until 1938, were extremely difficult ones for Liberia, and its people, including the Massaquoi family.<sup>11</sup> Fatima remained in Germany, working at the Consulate for a time. She continued her schooling until the NAZI menace began to make life uncomfortable for black people. She left Germany for Lane College without coming home. The period was doubly hard for Momolu. He felt that he let his "darling Muttchen" down, having no money at all to send her. He used his vast a gentle man worthy of implicit confidence. He tried him for many years and Tamba had done better than most of his sons. Tamba was on his way to Russia to study.<sup>12</sup> Nat, Tamba and Fatima grew up together. The correspondence between Tamba and Fatima is most

affectionate. They were together as much as possible before he went to Russia. But for some reason, perhaps the degree of kinship, they never married. She was a very devout Christian. If her kinfolk Bishop Momolu Gardner advised her that they were too closely related to marry that would have been reason enough for her. One feels that he was the great love of her life. She had a large number of friends, her own age, call on her when they traveled to Europe. Others were professional people who came in increasing numbers as the case concerning Liberia, at the League of Nations, began to get serious. Her brothers were ever concerned about her love life and tried to help in their own way. Jaiah wrote to her on 31 August 1929, inter-alia, "Mohamodu Dukely of the Mandingo tribe "a former school and classmate, graduate of the College of West Africa, Attorney-at-law, and chief of the money order bureau at the post office, came to inquire about her photograph. "He is thinking about you and confidentially wants you as a future companion." While Jaiah was in favor of the union he referred the matter to her "as a young woman, you have your choice." She chose not to pursue it.

## Professional Life

Her formal education consisted of the following:

SCHOOL AND LOCATION	FIELD	DATE	AWARD
Ecole Supérieur de Geneve	French	1932	Diploma
Helene Lange Oberrealschule Hamburg	German	1932/35	Arbitur
Hamburg University	Medicine	1935/37	—
Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee	Social Science	1937/38	B.A.
Fisk University, Nashville,	Social Science	1939/40	M.A.
Boston University	Social Studies	1943 and 1945/46	—

Fatima remained away from Liberia for almost a quarter of a century, from 1922 until 1946. Her return was at the personal invitation of the President - elect of the Republic William V. S. Tubman, when he and President Edwin J. Barclay visited the United States in May 1943. The two leaders were invited by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, when he stopped in Robertsfield, Liberia enroute from the wartime Casablanca conference. The Liberian Presidential election was held in May 1943, but the term of office began on 1 January the following year. It was customary for Liberian students in the United States to greet the visitors from their home country. Mr. Tubman was so impressed with Fatima that he invited her to teach at Liberia College, now the University of Liberia. This gesture was full of meaning.

Tubman knew of the unforgiving hatred that Barclay had for Fatima's father after Momolu had challenged him in the 1931 presidential election. Barclay began by ordering him prosecuted for alleged embezzlement of funds from the Post Office Department. As soon as Momolu was cleared of that charge, another was brought against him. This continued up until the day that he died in 1938.

“Even after Momolu’s death, President Barclay would not relent. John Henry Cooper, a relative by marriage, went to the mansion to ask the President what he should do. Barclay asked ‘What do you mean?’ Cooper suggested that the army turn out for the normal courtesies extended to a former Cabinet officer. The reply burned into the heart of the family: ‘Get out of here or I’ll kick you out!’. He did not want offices to close and people to go to the funeral. Next, Cooper went to hire the Frontier Force Band, a common practice. An agreement was reached but later had to be cleared with the President of the Republic. When the delegation went to the mansion, the reply this time was, ‘If you pay me in diamonds they are not going anywhere’. With that, Momolu was buried in a simple ceremony in his beloved country; his name and deeds were buried with him.”<sup>13</sup>

After this some of the Massaquoi brothers and their friends began to circulate anti-Barclay tracts for which the President had them charged with treason and imprisoned. Along with Fatima’s brother Nathaniel was Tamba, and a cousin James Wiles, who succeeded Momolu as Consul General in Hamburg.<sup>(14)</sup> Fatima, did not have to express her fears about returning to the land of her birth while Barclay was in power.

She preferred to be an expatriate. I believe that Uncle Besolow, a retired Associate Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court, spoke to Tubman a serving Associate Justice on the same court, asking him, while in the United States, to try to see his niece. But, Tubman lived under the Barclay regime, he did not need much prompting. Shortly after his inauguration he had Nat and Tamba released from prison, appointing Nat to be Stipendary Magistrate (Judge) at Bondiway Firestone Plantation.

Fatima returned to Liberia on 13 October 1946 and the following March took up appointment as Professor of French and Science at Liberia College, concurrently teaching in the Laboratory High School and Freshman and Sophomore College until 1952. These were all components of the same institution. Laboratory High School offered the standard secondary school curriculum. It was considered to be among the best secondary schools in the country and was used as a feeder for the degree program of Liberia College. She had great versatility as a teacher and over a period of time taught in almost all disciplines. In 1956 she was appointed Director and in 1960 Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. Having a great interest in African studies, she founded an Institute of African Studies and became its first Director. From October 1963 to April 1964 she toured the United States on a scholarship arranged by the U.S. Office of Education. The aim was staff development, specifically to see different fine arts colleges, but also to visit departments of anthropology and sociology as well as programs of African studies. She was able to visit a large number of institutions in the east and mid western parts of the country. I had the pleasure to spend a good deal of time with her during that visit. Her brother Nathaniel was in the Cabinet from 1957 until 1962 as Secretary (Minister) of Education. The two of them were very close. Whenever they saw each other, even on the streets of Monrovia, the conversation immedi-

ately turned to current educational policy and practice, more often than not, ending in an animated debate *in German*, the language they were both most comfortable in.

When Fatima returned from the United States in 1964 she was 51 years old and at mid-career. The University in that year consisted of five degree granting colleges: The College of Liberal and Fine Arts, formerly Liberia College, The Louis Arthur Grimes College of Law and Government, the William V.S. Tubman Teachers' Collège, The College of Agriculture and the College of Forestry. Four non-degree granting schools were also part of the University: Benjamin J.K. Anderson School of Commerce and Business Administration, Mary Ann Chesseman School of Home Economics and Applied Science, Thomas J.R. Faulkner School of Engineering and Applied Science, \*and Laboratory High School. The University did not enjoy a good reputation internationally. But, great efforts were being made to raise standards and to improve the quality of instruction. Admission was open to every Liberian high school graduate who could pass a mathematics and English test. In effect, this liberal admissions policy resulted in only one-third of the admitted students eventually graduating. During this period the teaching staff was predominantly Liberian, but Forestry and Science were staffed by expatriates through a UNESCO program. There were other limitations to be overcome. Shortage of books and equipment, no student housing at all, the need for 90% of the student body to work to support themselves, adjunct faculty who were absent for long periods of time. In the same year, 1964, physical plant was being improved, a contract with Cornell University aimed at staff improvement and some progress was made in reducing the intolerable political influence in University decision making. Fatima was in the middle of all of this activity. She was a gifted teacher and very student oriented, helping, listening, assisting financially those many students who came to her. This in addition to the administrative duties of Dean, the countless meetings and committees that make up life at any University. It is important to note, again, that she was not just another faculty member, but the most highly educated indigenous women of her generation. She was special to the increasing number of students who came from the hinterland and from the tribes of Liberia. As a one hundred percent Vai with royal lineage on her father's side, she was the symbol of what the majority in the country could aspire to. Yet, the tension between the immigrant Americo-Liberian community and the tribal people existed, and it was not always creative. Fatima served the University, the students and her country, for twenty-five eventful years. The end of her tenure was described in a personal communication to the author, dated 1 July 1972.

"...There are numerous manifold changes in Liberia, especially in my case. I have been forced into retirement this year and in fact my pension recommended by the Legislature is beginning today, July 1, 1972, so that I will now have a lot of time to devote to only writing and research... The question of my retirement does not hurt me because I am tired and need the rest. Only I am missing the University facilities such as typewriter, stationeries, secretary, etc.

It was a headache to run the African Studies without funds and people were entrusted with the funds who never released it. Besides that, the fundings were too small. I only spent in four years \$3,000.00 (Three Thousand Dollars) out of the \$12,000.00 appropriated and USAID spent \$16,000.00 in 1968 and \$20,000.00 in 1972 doing research in one of the same areas that I had covered. So you can see that this was a headache."

The University sent her off in grand style with an honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities, while the President of the Republic awarded her the Grand Star of Africa with the rank of Grand Commander.

### Retirement

In the six years of her retirement, before she died I had visited and stayed in her home on six occasions. This was in connection with research for the biography of her father. Fatima was a chain smoker and drank gallons of Pepsi Cola while pacing up and down talking about the past into my tape recorder. We had a very cordial relationship. I would often cook her favorite dish of chicken piri piri, after which we would go down to Water Street and visit with her bother Uncle Abe, who retired as Commissioner of Maritime Affairs the same year that she did. They would discuss the old days, while I would pose questions of clarification, all of which was being recorded. On other occasions we visited the hinterland together, to see where she and Abe were born, where Mama Jassa and Fatima lived, where Momolu's umbilical cord was buried and to talk to the "old people". On still another occasion, I spent three days reading to both Fatima and Abe the whole four hundred page manuscript on the life of their father, noting corrections and amplifications on different events. These were the most pleasant and enjoyable days of my life.

Fatima wrote to me from Nigeria on 20 December 1973. She was there with her daughter Yatta Vivian, whom everyone knew as Puppchen, visiting her son-in law's family. She was married on 25 August the same year to a Nigerian medical doctor Moses Seton. Fatima had suffered her first stroke in June of the same year. She made a good recovery, but lamented that the doctors at Kennedy Hospital told her to stop smoking and to cut down on her beloved Pepsi. She had a second stroke in 1974 which slowed her down some, but perhaps most of all frightened her into finally and for good giving up smoking. She lived with her daughter, son-in-law and two grand children in a house near the Ministry of Agriculture. In a sense these were some of her happiest days, being taken care of in a devoted and selfless way with the noise of grand children in her ears. I visited her several times in 1975, but could not stay at the house. We went to see Fatima's stepmother, Ma Sedia, up on Mamba Point. I took numerous pictures of Ma, Fatima, Abe, Puppchen, Moses and the grandchildren which were presented to both Ma Sedia and Fatima on subsequent visits. By 1977, Fatima was physically debilitated. One could only sit with her and hold her hand. She would smile in a

beatific way but was unable to say much. A cable from Puppchen announced her passing on 26 November 1978.

Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, the first and only woman to serve as a President of a university, on the African continent, spoke a tribute to Fatima on behalf of the University of Liberia. Herself part Vai, Fatima was her mentor. The simplicity and truth of the brief message is a fitting conclusion to this paper.

"...Therefore, whenever one undertakes anything, let it be great or small, he should never forget God's will in it." In these words end the story titled, "Put God First," adapted by Fatima Massaquoi Fahnbulleh and contributed to one of the early issues of the *University of Liberia Journal*. The striking truth and the philosophy communicated in these simple words are characteristic of the distinguished educator whose mortal remains lie before us. One of Liberia's best educated and an individual of remarkable versatility, "Madam" as she came to be affectionately called during her long period of unbroken service to the University of Liberia in particular and Liberian education in general remained simple and unaffected all her life.

Hers was a life of dedication to the Liberian nation and to the cause of education when few of our own men or women had the rich background or the opportunity of as wide and varied education as she. Hers was an earnest effort to inspire appreciation of our rich Liberian cultural heritage. Hers was an investment in students, relatives, and the many who needed her. Indeed, her life and work bear tribute to her brilliance, integrity, devotion to duty, openness of heart, and warmth better than anything that could be capsuled in these brief minutes.

The University of Liberia proclaims a great educator, scholar, mother - an outstanding Liberian citizen - is dead. We have come to mourn her loss, but even more to rejoice and give thanks to God for her life. She has handed the torch which she held high for enrichment of the lives of people and we will bless her memory if we let it continue to shine.

May God grant her rest eternal, strengthen and comfort her loved ones in these sad hours and give us all grace to so live that we at our lives' end may be numbered among His faithful servants."<sup>15</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Massaquoi of Liberia*, by Raymond J. Smyke; a full length biography in press, Reference Publications, Algonac, Michigan (1986). See also "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870-1938", by Raymond J. Smyke: In *Geneve-Afrique* Volume XXI - Number 1 (Journal of the Swiss Society of African Studies).
- <sup>2</sup> The personal correspondence that Fatima shared with me, as well as letters from her brother's widow, Winifred Massaquoi, totaled over 200 individual pieces. They begin in 1922, grow in volume, length and interest from early 1927, when Fatima left the family home in Hamburg for boarding school, until March 1938, three months before Momolu died. The correspondence between father and daughter often ran to five and six pages. Fatima also corresponded with Madam Sottile, in French, the wife of the Liberian representative to the League of Nations. She lived in their home while studying in Geneva. Others included her brothers, AlHaj, Ciaka, Jaiah and Arthur, Bishop Momolu Gardner and school friends some of whom became prominent in Liberian public life. The steadiest writer was her step-mother, Rachel Johnson Massaquoi, known by her Sande name "Ma Sedia". My own correspondence with the family begins in 1959 with her brother Nathaniel; in 1963 with Fatima and her brother Abraham, continuing up until the time that all three died.
- <sup>3</sup> See "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator" by Raymond J. Smyke, paper presented to the 17th Annual Liberian Studies Conference, Beloit College, 28 - 30 March, 1985.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid. *Massaquoi of Liberia* (biography) MS. Chapter VI.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. *Massaquoi of Liberia* (biography) MS. Chapter XV, Genealogy.
- <sup>6</sup> Microfilm: "Writings and Papers of Fatima Massaquoi - Fahnbulleh, Institute of African Studies, University of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia". Auto-Biography, p. 100; (no date).
- <sup>7</sup> Johann Buttikofer made two trips to Liberia while curator of the Royal Zoological Museum in Leiden. He stayed with Queen Sandimanie on both occasions. The first trip was from 1879 to 1882, the second from 1886 to 1887. A Bernois Swiss, he was a botanist by training employed by the Dutch government. He lived until 1927. While in Liberia, his scientist's eye missed no detail. In his two volumes *Reisebilder aus Liberia*, he recorded observations on everything and everyone he met, including the Queen. Among other things, his presentation of Liberian flora and fauna are among the best up to the present time. The two volumes, together with his other published works, deserve to be translated professionally into English. In addition to Buttikofer, Massaquoi's uncle, Thomas E. Besolow, who became an Associate Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court, was brought up by Queen Sandimanie and wrote about her in an early memoir, *The Story of an African Prince*, Boston, 1890. These, of course, are in addition to, and corroborate, the family stories about his mother that Momolu shared with the children. I was able to record this oral tradition as it was recounted to me, by Fatima, Prince Abraham, affectionately known as Uncle Abe, Ma Sedia and of course Nathaniel, as well as others.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Globe*, Toronto; from Friday 10 July 1891 to Saturday 18 July 1891, inclusive; and Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association, Toronto, Canada, 1891. "IN SEARCH OF AN EDUCATION, by Momolu Massaquoi, Prince of the Vey Nation, Africa".
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., "Massaquoi of Liberia 1870 - 1938", *Geneve-Afrique*. This details the critical years before, during and after his attempt for the Presidency in the 1930 election. It was very clear that Ma Sedia and he were in opposite political camps, but even before this estrangement, the marriage was on shaky ground. Dabbling in Americo Liberian politics had taken a physical toll on his health and well being. This was reflected in their home life. While interviewing Ma Sedia on several occasions between 1974 and 1977, she was bright, articulate and mobile for her age. She walked daily from her home in Mamba Point, to Waterside and back, but, 'allowed as how', the hill was getting



steeper. She told me, in some detail, about her work and social life in Hamburg. Ma had many German friends and made more effort to learn German than did her husband.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator".

<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to imagine today, the role played by the first African diplomat in Europe. As an indigenous person, familiar with colonial oppression, he became a magnet attracting the young men and women, from all over Africa, studying in England and elsewhere. The Consulate became an un-official clearing house of ideas, thoughts and aspirations for Africa. It could not be otherwise. Fatima recalled W.E.B. Du Bois, sitting on the sofa, relaxed, cigar in hand, sharing his thoughts on pan-africanism and the future of the race, with visitors. I am presently developing this line of research to show the influence that Massaquoi had, at the time, on young Africans studying in Europe. It is my view that he was as important, or more important, than the so called 'West African nationalists' from British territories, all of whom were contemporary with him.

<sup>12</sup> The story of the contacts that a number of the Massaquoi children and their friends had will Russia is very interesting and I am developing this aspect in detail. Some helpful background on the Soviet courting of black students and militants in the 1920's and the 1930's may be found in Harry Haywood's BLACK BOLSHEVIK (Liberator Press, Chicago, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. "Massaquoi of Liberia" 1870 - 1938, *Geneve Afrique*. (14) Ibid. "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: Liberian Educator"

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE FATIMA MASSAQUOI

FAHNBULLEH...", by Mary Antoinett Brown Sherman, President, University of Liberia, Montovia 5 December 1978. Dr. Brown deserves a biography on her own distinguished life. Her mother, whom I had met, was a humble Vai woman, while her father was the distinguished Louis Arthur Grimes for whom the Law School of the University is named; one of Liberia's greater lights. According to UNESCO there are about 95 full degree granting institutions in continental Africa. Some, of course, are very old, others date with the colonial period. Mary Antoinette is the first and only woman to head an African institution of higher learning. This is a distinction in itself. More important, is the record of her valiant efforts to extend leadership to the whole University of Liberia community during its critical years. A saga well worth telling.

# Gluten in Foods Liberians Eat: Implications about Sulfur and Nitrogen Metabolism in Agriculture and Human Health

*Cyril E. Broderick\**

## Introduction

This study involves greenhouse experimentation on the response of cassava to sulfur nutrition, followed with a collection and collation of literature about plants, foods, and gluten. It then relates the intrinsic metabolism and the chemical constitution of cassava and wheat in developing inferences about the influences of consumption of these foods to changes on human health. We found literary evidence and significant notes about changes in diets that occur with the migration of people. We present research data and evidence that indicate how dietary sulfur and nitrogen intake may relate to diversely different facets in human nutrition and metabolism with diversely different effects, from hair and nail composition to the incidence of diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. Also, examination of the biochemistry of gluten, with implications about its processing in metabolism, indicates that there is much to pursue in monitoring and characterizing dietary changes that manifest themselves among migrating populations.

Wars and civil strife in Liberia have forced the migration of tens of thousands of Liberians, especially to the United States and Europe, where a major change that Liberians experience is a modified diet, with variation in the proportion of nutrients found in the different foods in their meals. This dietary change is a reduction in the consumption of rice or cassava or both and an increase in the consumption of wheat-flour baked breads, biscuits, cookies and cakes. Additionally, there is a major rise in per capita consumption of poultry meat or beef.

Rice and cassava are major foods grown in sub-Saharan Africa on tropical soils, where Tisdale et al. (1986) reported that sulfur deficiencies are widespread, especially where annual rainfall is over 600 mm. They also emphasized a report of Bolle-Jones (1964) about incidences of sulfur deficiency that occur in Africa. Tisdale et al. (1986), however, noted that no sulfur deficiencies had been reported in Africa north of the Sahara.

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In plants, Gallie (1993) noted that during periods of sulfur deficiency in plants, synthesis of proteins decreased significantly, indicating that there is a role for sulfur availability in gene regulation. Furthermore, Grossman and Takahashi (2001) reported that sulfur supply affects the activities of key enzymes in plant assimilatory pathways.

Gillespie (1998) reported that a deficiency of sulfur in the animal ration will appear as a protein deficiency, and that slow growth and a general unthrifty condition are symptoms of possible sulfur deficiency. For sheep, he reported, that there is lower wool production with sulfur deficiency.

People who are raised on plants and animals with poor nutrition, including low soil sulfur, are limited in their sulfur intake, and Liberians fall in this category (Broderick and Kiazolu, 1999). As people have migrated for centuries, people of African origin live around the world, especially in the United States, Brazil, England and other European countries, the Caribbean, and other places around the globe. In the temperate countries, sulfur supply is plentiful, and diets may contain an adequate to excess supply of this essential mineral nutrient element.

Wheat, the staple of temperate regions, has the singular property that its flour contains gluten, a mass of undissolved but hydrated protein complex. Lee (1983) notes that gluten is the ingredient that gives the flour its ability to form the elastic dough when mixed with the right amount of water. Although wheat is the major producer of gluten, gluten is produced in a number of other mostly temperate plants. The chemistry of gluten is that gluten is a mixture of proteins of varying molecular size held together by disulfide bonds. Many studies show how gluten is rich in sulfur-containing amino acids and complexes whose metabolic reactions are critically distinct in the biochemical process of plants and animals. Some animals and people digest gluten poorly; moreover, the use of gluten and other sulfur compounds from plants and animals in human metabolism has major implications for human health, and this is the essence of this paper.

This paper is consequently designed to compare the nature of sulfur supply in tropical soils, animal rations, and tropical foods, with the supply of sulfur in temperate foods, and to determine how problems in plant and animal nutrition affect diets of Liberian and other immigrant populations. We finally examine nutritional and other problems posed for human health, especially as they relate to the health and welfare of the Liberian immigrant population.

## Methodology

This report is the result of a series of inquiries to compare results that have been obtained from research on cassava, rice and wheat around the world, including work from international organizations. It examines published reports on sulfur in soils, sulfur in plants and animals, and the availability of sulfur and sulfur compounds in foods and diets of populations of Liberians and others of African descent.

This study is also a report of research conducted on the effects of sulfur on cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), and rice (*Oryza sativa*). It is also a compilation and collation of literature about sulfur in plants, animal and human nutrition. It relates the intrinsic metabolism and the chemical constitution of these foods re their sulfur content in developing inferences about the influences that sulfur and its compounds have on agricultural plants, animal production, and human health.

Research work that was conducted with cassava was done in a Latin Square design that tested the effect of sulfur, calcium and urea on the growth and development of the cassava plant. In most of the experiments conducted, there were five treatments and five replications of each treatment to make the five-by-five Latin Square design. A typical Latin Square Design provides for effective statistical analysis of the data secured in the experiment. Other studies included the growth of cassava in the controlled environment of tissue culture, where test elements were removed from the growth media to determine the effects of deficiencies.

Finally, this paper examines the incidence of diseases among Liberians, African-Americans, and other people of African descent in discerning interrelationships among these diseases and the deficiency or involvement or participation of sulfur and its compounds.

## Results and Discussion

Plant growth and development data show clearly that the cassava plants responded to sulfur fertilization. The level of response was found to be related firstly to the supply of nitrogen as well as to the availability of other fertilizer elements. Other elements also show some interaction with sulfur. Dutcher et al. (1951) noted that although sulfur is an essential element (in human nutrition), there is little likelihood of sulfur deficiency, but his reference was to temperate areas, where sulfur is readily available in agricultural lands. For tropical soils, Tisdale et al. (1986) show clear and unambiguous data that deficiency exists and is widespread.

**Sulfur in Plants:** The report of Tisdale (1986) shows that sulfur is lacking in West Africa's soils. FAO (1996) data as well as data from other sources confirm this deduction. Even where there is the use of commercial fertilizers in agriculture in Liberia, it is clear that the levels of fertilizer supply are far below the amounts required for sustained production of quality agricultural commodities and products.

There is a differential availability of sulfur around the world, and there is a definite lack of sulfur applied to fields in fertilizers, in local feeds fed to animals, and in diets of the bulk of the Liberian populace. Our work reaffirms reports of Reading (1986) that showed strong response to sulfur fertilization, with interactions between sulfur and nitrogen in influencing grain and product composition.

**Sulfur in Animals:** Sulfur is one of the essential mineral nutrients required by plants, animals, and man. Dutcher et al. (1951) noted that sulfur is a normal constituent of all body cells, where it exists as sulfur-containing amino acids in the tissue

proteins. It is noted that sulfur is a constituent of chondroitin sulfate in cartilage and bone, glutathione, biotin, and insulin. It is also a constituent of proteins of hair and feathers, noting that the sulfur requirement of molting hens is high. The same is true of laying hens, since relatively large amounts of sulfur are lost in the eggs during periods of high egg production.

Poultry, swine, and beef production declined drastically with the war in Liberia, and it is clear that even in peacetime, local feeds undersupply many of the nutrients that animals require (Shulze, 1973). Commercial feeds are quite expensive, and they are typically imported and supplemented with poor local feeds that have a marginal nutrient base. The consequence is that beef, swine, and poultry are typically undernourished and susceptible to physiological and pathological diseases.

**Sulfur in Human Nutrition:** Sulfur is required in the metabolism of plants, animals and people, and farmers, nutritionists, and hygienists ensure a supply of sulfur to the various organisms, including plants, animals and people. Proteins are compounds that make up body structures and enable metabolic processes in the body to work, and they are made of some 20 amino acids. The amino acids cysteine and methionine are the two that contain sulfur, and no other element can substitute for sulfur in these indispensable amino acids. There are other important compounds that contain sulfur, and it is clear that sulfur compounds are essentials in plant, animal and human metabolism.

In addition to the metabolic functions of sulfur and its compounds, sulfur is also required for body structures. Whereas leaf structures on plants become pale yellow from their normal green color when sulfur is lacking, in animals, a lack of sulfur causes poor development of hair, nails, and even bone structure. This is because sulfur is a major component of keratin, a protein of the hair, and collagen, a protein found in toenails, fingernails, and bone structures. Moreover, there is a lot of interaction between sulfur and calcium metabolism.

With regard to the nutrition of Liberians, a major consequence of war has been the reduction in the per capita consumption of quality vegetables, legumes, and meat, meaning a forced reduction in the supply of protein with the quota of sulfur-containing amino acids, cysteine and methionine. The result of the poor protein supply is that consumers' metabolism work harder to garnish as much of the cysteine, methionine and other sulfur nutrients from the plant and animal materials consumed in their foods. Notably, however, with the poor supply of sulfur from plants and animals, the question of adequate sulfur nutrition for Liberians is legitimate.

As we examine the sulfur content of rice and cassava, the two major food sources in diets of Liberians, we must ensure that sulfur and its compound and their interaction with other compounds must also be categorized.

For the population in Liberia, some of whom may immigrate to the United States and Europe, it is important that there is the recognition of the sulfur deficiency that exists in their foods and diets in Liberia. This should develop a follow-up commitment

to supply sulfur-containing fertilizers for crop farming endeavors. Also animal feeds must be fortified with sulfur-containing acids, and people's diets should contain an adequate supply of proteins that are rich in the desired amino acids, including the sulfur-containing amino acids cysteine and methionine.

### **Sulfur Nutrition and Human Diseases**

One disease consequence of sulfur deficiency is the occurrence of the Konzo. Konzo is a physiological disease has proved to be a major problem to the poor to residents in some rural areas. The occurrence of the disease is a major manifestation of a problem and an interaction with dietary lack of sulfur. The web site <[www.nutrition.uu.se/studentprojects/group97/cassava/cassava.htm](http://www.nutrition.uu.se/studentprojects/group97/cassava/cassava.htm)> provides a good picture of the disease as it affects people in the Tropics.

Evidence is that dietary sulfur and nitrogen intake are complementary facets in human nutrition and metabolism, with effects that range from hair and nail composition to the incidence of diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) lists heart disease as the number one cause of death in the United States (CDC, 2000). Moreover, Cooper et al. (1999) pointed out that hypertension is more prevalent among African Americans. There was no indication of the cause, but the data they presented for rates in Africa (Nigeria), the Caribbean (Jamaica) and the United States show parallel correlation with regard to sulfur intake and changes in diets. When sulfur supply is related to gluten intake, the picture gets even more interesting. An examination of the biochemistry of gluten, with implications about its processing in metabolism, indicates that there is much to pursue in monitoring and characterizing dietary changes that manifest themselves among migrating populations.

Although there is evidently an undersupply of sulfur in diets in Liberia, diets in the United States are typically adequate to excessive in sulfur supply. Sulfur in gluten, and where foods are fortified with other sulfur-containing compounds, may cause an oversupply of sulfur in the new diets of the United States and other temperate countries.

Today, heart disease, cancer and stroke are recognized as leading causes of death, and it is significant that numerous researchers are finding that these diseases may relate to diets, lifestyle and the environment (The Phytochemical Collection, 2002). The report review the notation that homocysteine (a derivative of the amino acid cysteine) is produced and builds up after the consumption of meat, and leads to a build-up of fat and other materials on the inside of arteries. This deposition has been established as a major cause of atherosclerosis, the clogging of arteries and a major factor in the cause of heart disease.

Let me quote an important part of the report that,

...many laboratories have been able to contrast and compare genetically similar people in different dietary environments, e.g. comparing the health of

Japanese eating a traditional diet in Japan versus Japanese American eating a conventional American diet... [noting that] ...Hundreds of studies from around the world have established that diets high in plant based foods are associated with lower rates of cancer and heart disease, sometimes astonishingly so. One analysis of data from 23 epidemiological studies showed that a diet rich in whole grains and vegetables reduced the risk of colon cancer by 40 percent. Another study demonstrated that women who don't eat many fruits and vegetables have a 25 percent higher risk of developing breast cancer.

Regarding the Cooper et al. (1999) report that studied hypertension (heart disease) in populations in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States and found that locality has a lot to do with the incidence of nutritional or physiological disease. Much of the change with locality relates to the availability of food. This finding shows how changes in demography and others may definitely exist; hence, it is critical that we examine agricultural, nutritional and physiological factors that may cause such problems. Sulfur is available from both organic and inorganic sources in food. The sources include sulfur-containing amino acids that are supplied in proteins, in compounds that include cysteine, cystine, methionine, as well as glutathione, chondroitin sulfate, and bile salts. Glutathione is the tripeptide,  $\gamma$ -glutamyl-cysteinylglycine.

Sulfur compounds also include some extracellular materials that are made from complex compounds. Such compounds include (1) Hyaluronic acid, a viscous, fluid-like substance that binds cells together, lubricates joints, and maintains the shape of the eyeballs; (2) chondroitin sulfate, a jelly-like substance that provides support and adhesiveness in cartilage, bone, heart valves, the cornea of the eye, and the umbilical cord; (3) collagen, a protein that form glue-like fibers that are found in connective tissues, especially in bones, cartilage, tendons, and ligaments; and (4) keratin and others that consist of numerous other compounds that contain sulfur (Totoro and Anagnostakos, 1984).

Sulfur compounds also serve as major ingredients in flavoring substances. Such compounds are responsible for the odors and flavors of vegetables such as onions and garlic, condiments such as horseradish, the spice mustard, and even collards and cabbage.

There are advantages to gluten in the diet in that the required sulfur-amino acids are supplied, and that the nutritional requirements are met.

The disadvantages of gluten relate to possible problems with gluten sulfur metabolism among Liberians, a traditionally non-wheat or low wheat consuming population. The population may have developed alternate mechanisms to accommodate the lack of sulfur, and with an oversupply of sulfur, individual metabolisms may become antagonistic in their chemical response to excess sulfur. The chemical and physical health of the individuals may then be compromised.

For people in Liberia, it is important that we recommend strong fertilization of crop plants with sulfur fertilizers. It is also important that we encourage the feeding of

farm animals with feed that have a good supply of sulfur, and that we promote the consumption of foods, including onions, collard greens, mustard greens, cabbages, and legumes, that a good supply of sulfur nutrient compounds.



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## Women Who Made A Difference: A Special Record

*Stanton Peabody\**

When I was growing up women played a very negligible role in public life. In Liberia they looked after the home, raised the children, some of them taught schools and they prayed for the preservation of the nation. In the history book we learned about Susana Lewis who got some women together and they designed and made the Liberian flag. Later on, we learned about the daring feat of Matilda Newport who, with a coal from her pipe dropped in a loaded cannon, she was able to disperse an advancing band of tribal warriors who were fighting against the settlers. Had she not done this, according to the history book, the tribal warriors would have won and the story would be different today. Long after I finished school, politicians continue to wrestle over the Matilda Newport saga. Some say it is all a myth while others feel the whole story is too sensitive to be in the history book. But we cannot get vex with history, nor can we change it. What has been has been.

Apart from these two instances of women's participation in the national life of the country, hardly anything else was known or is now acknowledged. I feel therefore compelled to give recognition to few women who, within the period of my life, helped to make positive changes in the course of the national direction. They may not have been politicians, they did not hold high positions in government, but their role contributed in the enhancement of a better life for all the people of this country.

I therefore made researches, conducted interviews and came out with a few which I share with my readers here. They include Mrs. Eugenia Simpson-Cooper, Dean Anna Cooper, Nurse Maggie Dennis, Mrs. Agnes Von Balmoos, Madam Suacoco and others. I do not ask my readers to agree with me in my selections, but acknowledge the fact that a large number of women have made a difference in Liberia in their own way have made a difference.

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\* Mr. Peabody, a distinguished veteran Liberian journalist is the author of this record. .

**WOLO V. WOLO**

A Powerful Tool In the Advancement of Women's Rights  
A Protection Against Human Rights Abuse

No one realized in 1935 that a marriage turned sour and on the verge of separation would one day form the pillar on which every citizen would lean in defence of his Constitutional rights of due process. This is what happened when the stubbornness of a woman prevailed over the passionate plea of her friends to let the men have their way. As a result of the persistence of Mrs. Juah Weeks-Wolo in 1935, pursuing her rights through the courts, the case Wolo V. Wolo has become a powerful tool to advance not only women's rights but in the protection of every citizen whose Human Rights have been trampled on in this country today.

Male chauvinism in Liberia was at its height in the thirties and from all intent and purposes, the nation was a male-dominated society. Women had very little privileges; they enjoyed no suffrage and the law could be twisted or manipulated at will by the men to suit their own purposes. It was against this background that Juah Weeks-Wolo sought to protect her rights under her marriage to P.G. Wolo, a learned gentleman and a Member of the Legislature. He had bypassed the regular judicial channel and tried to annul their marriage by obtaining a legislative divorce.

While the Constitution and the judicial system of the nation protect women and their legal and marital rights, history reveals that Legislative divorces were in vogue. According to Charles Huberich's "Political and Legislative History of Liberia," there had been 13 Legislative divorces before 1873. These divorces, however, were entertained and granted upon joint petition of the parties with no one raising any objections. After the passage of the first Amendatory Statute on Divorce in 1873, the practice was discontinued until 1920 when Senator James S. Smith applied for a legislative divorce from his former wife. No other application was made again until Counselor P.D. Wolo put in his petition fifteen years later. The history of their marital relations must have been strewn with unfaithfulness, disagreement and mistrust on the part of her husband. She claimed in her petition before the Supreme Court that Mr. Wolo, her husband, had "impregnated" three girls she was rearing. Mrs. Wolo therefore had no intention of continuing to live with her husband; she too wanted a divorce but she wanted her rights protected. This was the crux of her objections.

Her husband, on the other hand, did not wish to go through with a divorce in court; he wanted to protect his reputation. But he failed to realize that his wife was not only an aggrieved party, but she was a woman scorned and this was dangerous. She knew her rights and had access to the means to advocate for them. Therefore, despite pleas from her friends to abandon her objections, she stood fast and refused to be intimidated or coerced into submission. "I will do no such thing," she cried when her friends tried to prevail upon her.

"You know you can't fight these people," they reasoned. "Your husband is a big man; he knows plenty book and is a big friend of the President. The Legislature finished deciding, what are you coming to do now? You think the Supreme Court will help you? Grimes there on the Bench; you know he is the President's cousin. Those boys will stick together."

But Juah was persistent. She was a hard-headed strong willed Kru woman who feared nothing. She therefore decided to rush in where angels dared tread. "He Kru, I Kru!" she retorted. "You think I will let this man come and eat on top of my head just because he know book? Or just because he is the President's friend? Do you know what I have been through all these years - and I must now sit and let it all go to waste? We will fight it out in court. You ain't see nothing yet. When I finish with P.G. he will know who born dog," she told her friends as she prepared to make her stand and take her leap into history.

It was a leap into history because no one had challenged such an action before the Supreme Court. There had been instances where the Legislature had passed Joint Resolutions removing officials from office, including their own members; getting a divorce through the Legislative channel had always been carried out through a joint petition of both parties. In this instance, not only was this not done, but the record showed that the Legislature never served Juah Weeks with notice; never called her to testify. In short, they never gave her an opportunity to defend her rights. They only went through the process ignoring her rights and privileges.

Juah Weeks therefore reminds one of the Woman Suffragette Susan B. Anthony who was taken to court for challenging the voting laws in New York. Susan defiantly told the Judge before sentencing was announced: "You have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government and robbed me of my fundamental privilege." Just as Susan B. Anthony led a group of women activists to break the male-dominated arc 'er which allowed only women the right to vote so did Juah Weeks ook her lone stand against the entire government uncertain what the results would have been. And this is how the case Wolo versus Wolo enters the annals of Liberian Law books as a landmark decision. Almost daily Wolo versus Wolo has become the wake up call, the invocation in the Courts by those whose rights are being trampled on. Lawyers pleading before the Courts call out: "Your Honor, according to Wolo v. Wolo..."

The case puts into focus two basic issues which heretofore had not been settled in court.

1. That Legislative Divorce is an unconstitutional assumption of Judicial powers by the Legislative Branch. And

2. That under the facts of the instant case, she was denied the right of due process.

The Court asked: "What were some of the rights and privileges vested in Juah Weeks-Wolo by her marriage to P.G. Wolo" that a Legislative divorce would deprive her of contrary to the law of the land?

It did not wait for an answer. The Court replied: "The right to share the bed and board of her husband, to his protection, support, comfort and society during their joint lives, and in the event he predeceased her to the possession and enjoyment of one third of his personal property for ever, and one third of his realty for her natural life.." The Court was making it clear here that something had gone wrong - Mrs. Wolo had been "robbed of her fundamental privileges" by the action of the Legislature.

The Court then pointed out how important the issue before it was, when it declared that the "principle involved is so broad, so deep, so fundamental, that when considered in all its possible ramifications the case Wolo versus Wolo cannot but sink into insignificance besides the potential implications that might arrive from any decision we might give in the premises."

Wolo versus Wolo has become a landmark Supreme Court decision which enshrined the rights of women in the Constitution and opened the door of justice to them. It forged new territories for others to follow and made a significant difference in the social structure regarding women's rights and how far the Legislature can go with its powers.

But above all, the Wolo Case is the one case in Liberian law books that is oft repeated from the Justice of the Peace Court up to the Supreme Court.

In dealing with the case, the Court recognized that there were certain basic, fundamental rights of Mrs. Wolo which had been violated through the Legislative process. It observed that the "law of the land" refers to "certain fundamental rights which our system of Jurisprudence has always recognized. The Constitutional provision that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law - and this extends to every government proceedings which may interfere with personal or property rights, whether that proceeding be Legislative, Judicial or Executive, and relates to that class of rights the protection of which is peculiarly within the province of the judicial branch of government.

Continuing, the Court observed that the term "due process of law" when applied to judicial proceedings, means that there must be a competent tribunal to pass on the subject matter; notice actual or constructive, an opportunity to appear and produce evidence to be heard in person or by counsel; and if the subject matter involves the determination of the personal liability of the defendant he must be brought within the jurisdiction by service of process within the State, or by voluntary appearance. When the case in the Legislature was called, Juah Weeks-Wolo was never given an opportunity to avail herself of any of these rights.

The praise for such a historical Opinion, one would think, should go to the Justices of the Supreme Court, particularly Chief Justice Louis Arthur Grimes, who delivered the opinion of the Court, but issues are brought before the Court. The Court does not go in search of issues. It was the forthrightness of Mrs. Wolo and her defiant stand against those who were wringing out of her grasp her rights and privileges as a married woman, that so important a Decision is now emblazoned in the legal history

of this country.. She laid the premise for the empowerment of women under the constitution. She began to break down barriers erected by men to make the women subservient. There are numerous instances where men and women sit on their rights and refuse to protect them. Such attitude pave the way for dictatorship or breed docility in a society. Had Juah Weeks not challenged the procedure in defense of her rights, the Legislature today would have been turned into a Divorce Court where the aggrieved party would be at the mercy of greedy politicians seeking to deprive women of their rights. Many today should Thank God for Juah Weeks!

The case also demonstrates how stratified the Liberian society was at the time. In a simile, the Court compared the social standing of the two parties involving another case - the one brought by a former President and the other by Juah Wolo - all seeking justice before the courts.

We have presented a picture of two persons whose respective social positions are in antithesis the one to the other. The one, Honorable Arthur Barclay, then as now an ex president of Liberia, and therefore of the highest social status in the country. The other, Mrs. Juah Weeks -Wolo, a woman of practically no social status or importance; both alike appealing to the law of the land in defense of vested rights about to be wrung from them by violence and invoking inter alia the same section 8 article 1 of the Constitution. The latter in defense of her rights and privileges as a married woman, the former in defense of his rights of property. This picture should be a constant reminder to us that in a country such as ours, the only bulwark of the people against oppression, or the illegal deprivation of their rights and privileges, be they high or low, be they rich or poor, is the written Constitution handed down to us as the most precious heritage bequeathed to us by our Fathers.

If this Court should decide that Juah Weeks-Wolo, appellant, can be deprived of her rights and privileges as a married woman, without due process of law in violation of the Constitutional inhibition, then what will become of the rights and privileges of those Civil Officers whose removal from office upon the Joint Address of both Houses of the Legislature must be for cause stated?

The Court here was playing politics, because it knew well that its decision was a constitutional rebuke against the Legislative intrusion into the functions of the judiciary. The Court was also reminding Legislators that the weapon it was using to wrench the marital rights out of the grasp of Mrs Wolo could also be used to remove from office any of its members or any official of government without recourse to the law of the land. The pebble which Juah Weeks-Wolo had thrown into the judicial and political pools had begun to form ripples which were widening and washing against shores, the repercussions of which were being felt in unimagined quarters. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Wolo was surprised when she found that the case

was going in her favor. No one expected the Court would go against the boys. But the Court had an answer for that too. It noted that this case was the first of its kind in the history of the court and

...having envisaged the extent to which the rights of people can be assailed by the disregard of the principle of due process of law, were we to place our imprimatur upon the enactment {that is, the Leg. Divorce Decree}, the basis of Appellee,s contention, we feel that we would be recreant of the high trust and confidence imposed upon us.

The decision left the Executive flabbergasted. The Legislature was foaming at the mouth while the public stood agape. But the real victim and loser was Dr. P.G. Wolo, the husband who had already remarried. Now the Courts opinion rendered his subsequent marriage null and void since Juah Weeks remained his lawful wife in the eyes of the law. Something had to be done to take Senator Wolo out of the mess he found himself saddled with. Again he sought help from his friend, the President. And here Edwin Barclay, the intellectual, the statesman and crafty individual, felt he could bend any law to save a friend or to deprive Juah Weeks of her rights.

The case strengthened the awareness and the protection of women's human rights. It showed what an activist Juah Weeks was and the knowledge of one's rights is an empowerment to keep others from violating those rights. It revealed also that somewhere in the society citizens were getting tired of the advantage which were being taken of them in some quarters. This is what happened in the United States in the 60s when Rosa Parks sparked the Bus Boycott in Alabama by refusing to yield her seat to a white man. Sometime along the way, the cup of injustice begins to overflow and when it runs over recourse must be sought through the judicial process or else violence creeps in. Juah Weeks, by insisting on going the way of legality made for women to put their trust and confidence in due process as the surest way of seeking justice in a civilized society.

### AGNES VON BALMOOS

She Broke The Musical Barrier

She Liberianized Liberian Folksongs and Music

The Founding Fathers of Liberia came to these shores in the early 19th Century packaging all the prejudices, customs and constraints of a land and people who had ...debarred them by law from all the rights and privileges of man!.. They came intending to build a newsociety for all. However, unknowingly they brought along all elements of a western civilization and culture. They were dressed in tail-coats and wore top-hats; they built churches and prayed to the God of Christianity; they built houses usually described as ante bellum styles of the southern United States. They also devel-



oped the same attitude towards things indigenous as dictated by Missionaries who sought to eradicate traditional culture. African traditions and culture were vulgar or unChristian.

In his "In The World," Paul Harrison maintains that: "Indigenous ways [were] held up to scorn and ridicule" [and those who adopted them became a] "negative reference group." This was a form of cultural imperialism to which we became either victims of, or willing accomplices to. In schools students were taught to behave in the western manner, they were taught to dress western, sing and dance western. All things native were looked on as unacceptable. Consequently, Western writers always characterized Liberia as a place of the Tom Toms and Top Hats. This attitude continued from generation to generation until the late 1950s when the wind of change began to blow through Africa; it swept through Liberia and gradually native dress was officially sanctioned. Tribal gowns became vogue and the lappa took root.

This cultural breakthrough was, nonetheless, limited. Folksongs in Liberian dialect were not appreciated, either because they were not understood by all, or because of the age-old attitude of treating with "scorn and ridicule" things indigenous. This behaviour somewhat stunted artistic advancement and many young Liberian artists could find no audience or patron to support the development of their musical quest. What was needed then was yet another breakthrough and this was not long in coming when the young musician Agnes Von Balmoos was called to take over the directorship of the University Choral Group. Von Balmoos had studied music at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music at Indiana University. She had long recognized the duality in our musical culture. She therefore came back home with definite intention of integrating the national folksongs on the same and equal acceptable plane.

In her Thesis, "The Role of Folksongs In Liberian Society " Agnes Von Balmoos declared that:

My interest is first of all to develop the musical literature of Liberia .... and give an over-all view of certain genesis of folksongs in Liberia and the role of those songs in two subculture of the society. Through this medium a number of Liberians will be exposed to the music of their country and learn to appreciate it. Simultaneously foreigners will become aware of the folksongs of Liberia and will recognize Liberia's contribution to the world of folksongs.

It cannot be denied that she has achieved this objective when she was given a place to stand at the University of Liberia. There, as Director of Music and in charge of the University Choral Group, Agnes Von Balmoos placed the stamp of acceptability on indigenous music and songs.

Agnes had lamented the "lack of exposure to either the indigenous or settler music in the country" and she had vowed to create an impact by "providing material which can be used in schools to further the cause of national development..." She provided the musical material, taught the students and their renditions placed indigenous songs on a pedestal unseen in Liberia. In the 1970s the University Choir, under the director-

ship of Agnes V Balmoos performed at the University auditorium and then at the Executive Pavilion. The songs they sang were indigenous songs sang in the dialects. At that rendition, she Liberianized Liberian music and broke the barrier of cultural imperialism. Through that rendition, she made Liberians appreciate their own music and accept it as morally and spiritually superior or equal to western style music. After that performance the University Choral Group was invited on a tour of the United States. She not only fulfilled her dream by exposing the local music of the country to Liberians themselves, but "simultaneously" foreigners became aware of the folksongs and began to give it recognition.

In the past serious efforts had been made to put Liberian music in the limelight, but it never reached the state where it would gain unanimous approbation. There was, like the society itself, a split personality. There were those who accepted the settler music and those who looked down on the indigenous music as "country" or vulgar. Consequently, only the music - the settler songs - were cultivated in schools and accepted in places of amusement or in churches. When efforts were made to develop and improve upon the musical skills of Liberians, they were taught only western style songs. As a result, Liberia's top musicians H.B.Hayes, the blind musician and composer, Edwin Barclay, whose piano compositions were played over BBC, and Georgia Payne-Cooper were all confined or restricted to western style notes.

In the fifties, the University of Liberia started its musical or art program when it placed a Russian Professor Alexander Kontorowitz at the head of the Musical Department. The Russian Professor trained a team of Liberians in violin or what he termed Chamber Music, but again the development of indigenous music was completely ignored.

Agnes changed all this when she took over the Musical Department of the University. She upgraded local music by taking the so-called country songs or folksongs and gave them the empowerment which enabled them to gain acceptability and cultural credit. Once she broke that barrier, she raised the curtain on such stars as Tee-Kpah Nimley for his "Mohn Keh-O, Mohn Keh-O", otherwise known as the "Gbezohn Wrap"; "Fly Was Living Before Dog Ear Cut" Fatu Gayflor, Color Boy and even Tecumseh Roberts, Zach and Geebah.

She made a "significant difference" in the Liberian world of music by breaking down existing prejudices and adding to the indigenous songs, the do-re-mes which made them music to the national ear.

**MOTHER FRANCIS DAVIS-BLATCH**

*She Gave Religious And Moral Empowerment To The Nation*

When Christians boast that Liberia was founded on Christian principles they are not seeking to exclude the followers of other religious faiths from the national table, nor are they voicing a kind of preferential entitlement to things national in favor of Christians. What they really mean is that at the beginning, those who planted the trees of nationhood wherever never hesitated to stop and say a word of prayer. This responsibility was left mostly to the women who held regular prayer meetings in every town, settlement or village. These meetings were conducted daily in the evenings and they were attended by most of the women in the communities accompanied by their children. Thus prayer meetings or Prayer Bands have become a part of the Liberian religious, cultural setting.

These Prayer meetings had an empowering impact on the lives of many women in the society. In some cases, they were the pivot on which community life evolved. It drew families and neighbors closer and usually it served as a community clearinghouse of social and moral ills where everyone "took it to the Lord in Prayer."

A religious movement developed out of these prayer meetings and one of the chief movers was Mother Leila January. She was an American Female Evangelist who came to Liberia as a Missionary and took the nation by storm. She toured several towns and settlements preaching the Word of God and leaving her listeners spellbound. Many women in the community joined the Mother January group. They included Mother Izetta Prout, Sisters Regina Davis, Florence McClaim, Louise Hood, Wokie Parker, Diana Jones, Clara Blaine-Wilson and Rosetta Harding. They began to fellowship with the Prayer Band of Mother Leila January and vowed to carry on the work she had commenced in Liberia. One of those women was Frances Davis-Blatch, otherwise known as Mother Blatch who was baptized with "the Holy Ghost and Fire" under Mother January on August 3, 1938, according to the Official Gazette issued at the instant of her death.

After Mother January's Religious Revival, Mother Blatch started holding Prayer meetings on Benson Street in the rented house of District Commissioner and Mrs. Jude Reeves behind the Moslem Mosque and at Mother Sarah Barclay's home on Front Street now King Sao Bosose Street. Meanwhile, Mother January died on October 9, 1940, and the mantle of religious leadership fell on Mother Blatch and the Rev. Valentine Brown. Mother Blatch established the Lighthouse Full Gospel Church which was located on Benson Street, Crownhill Hill. The Church consisted of a Prayer Band, with a "Healing Ministry", a Missionary Society, a Sunday School and several other Day Schools.

Under the banner of these various groups, Mother Blatch kept burning the evangelistic flame of Christianity which had been lit by Mother January. The Official Gazette, Extraordinary which gave a life sketch of Mother Blatch defined the growing

role of the Prayer Band Ministry when it pointed out that "her home was a Refuge Home and her Church was a Social Welfare Center." She lived an exemplary life in consonance with her favorite passage of Scripture: "Cast Thy Bread Upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." - Ecclesiastes 11:1. Her home was always filled with those in need and she was always ready to offer the proper advice to wayward boys and girls. She, according to the Gazette, conducted religious demonstrations that attracted large crowd. These demonstrations depicted the Christian way of life such as "Cross and Crown", "Daniel in the Lion's Den" and "The Christian Journey." She celebrated Anniversary Days and held Fast and Prayer Days, Tarry Nights, Counseling Sessions, Community Revivals and New Year Watch Meetings. Today, Tarry Nights and Community Revivals have become a part of the unique religious culture of the country. There is hardly a community where religious groups such as Prayer Bands do not hold Tarry. Participants at these Tarrys toil all night singing and praying and each giving testimony for what the Lord has done for him or her.

Mother Blatch developed an empowering personality and many believed in her commitment to service. The land on which she built the Light House Full Gospel Church was given her by Henry B.Duncan in 1952. There she constructed the church and a parsonage. In furtherance of her Mission, however, she was not always on the receiving end of the line. Her benevolence in 1952 extended to the raising of funds to provide the ticket money for the Rev. J. Benedict Mason to travel to Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA to pursue courses in Education and Theology. Benedict Mason became a powerful preacher and himself a church builder.

In her family life she was married to Frederick Anthony Blatch in 1938 who had earlier immigrated to Liberia from the West Indies in the textile industry connect with other in the Marcus Garvey Movement.

They lived happily and fruitfully until his death on July 2, 1959. Her five children predeceased her.

The Prayer Band Ministry has grown into a national institution with Prayer Bands spread all over the country led by the Reverend Mothers. Some of the famous and influential Mothers are Mother Dukuly who ran The Faith Healing Temple on Bushrod Island now administered by Mother Mai Roberts. Mother Dukuly was the religious consultant of both President Tolbert and President Samuel Doe. There is Mother Brown of the Gates of Heaven, Mid-day Prayer Band on Broad Street and Mother Johnson of Paynesville to name only a few.

It was Mother Blatch, however, who defined the future role of the Prayer Band when she used her home as a place of Refuge and her Church as a Social Welfare Center. These activities came handy during the war as most of the Prayer Band Centers in Monrovia became refuge centers for the displaced. Her vision of a Prayer Band was not limited to singing and praying, but to offering service to the needy. During the war Prayer Band Groups became the sole mechanism in the society catering to the displaced and the Orphaned and Abandoned Children. Out of these humanitarian

activities some of the Prayer Bands have developed Orphanages for these children while some engage in counseling to the traumatized ones.

Mother Blatch was a striking role model when we see around here today the many Prayer Bands and religious Mothers who conduct Tarries, Religious Counseling and the Healing Ministry, but she gave the religious community something empowering to remember - that a nation is not enriched by the wealth of the soil alone, but by the moral and spiritual development of its human resource; and that women can always make that "significant difference" in the society. These women who hold tarries, who conduct prayer bands or who conduct prayers in neighborhood or on street corners carry the banner held aloft by Mother Blatch. She took it from Mother January and through her worthiness as a true disciple, the flame continues to glow. She may not have been flamboyant evangelist, but Mother Blatch was a woman of substance in the nation. Her Benson Street Church survived until 1996 when the April 6 fighting ravished Monrovia. The building was destroyed, but her congregation continues to hold service in the area, vowing to rebuild the edifice to her memory.

Mother Blatch was one of those empowering women of our times whose works live on in the lives of those she touched. She did not confine her work to things spiritual alone; she operated a boarding school in Paynesville. She made flags, banners, bunting, badges, school uniforms and mail bags. And at one time President Tolbert was pleased to confer upon her the distinction of Knight Grand Commander of the Humane Order of African Redemption "in recognition of the outstanding contributions made to the spiritual and educational development of this nation."

Because of the efforts of Mother Blatch who continued the work of Mother January, women in Liberia gained religious empowerment and broke the barrier of male domination in the religious sphere.

Today, except for the Roman Catholics in the Christian community, women head religious organizations not only serving as deacons, but as priests, and in some denominations as Bishops. Her caring activities led to the expansion of the Prayer Band Ministry to include humanitarian work where they were seen feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, the orphans and the distressed. Mother Blatch went before, inspiring others to dig down deep, to do better, never for self, but in service to others. A role model? A woman of influence? A woman of substance? Make your pick.

### THOSE ANGELS OF MERCY

Extending the Human Face of The Nation in the hinterland

When the Founders of this nation established a government on the coastal area they gradually began to extend their influence and control interiorward through expeditions like the one undertaken by B.J.K. Anderson, and through negotiations with

government representatives and tribal chiefs. However, no matter how much territory was gained the major problem which confronted the government was how to win the confidence of the people in the interior. The Government needed this confidence in order to extend its central authority peacefully for the smooth operation of administrative control throughout.

Commerce had begun to flow with few goods moving interiorward and products from inland began finding a market along the coast. Government welcomed this intercourse however limited and restricted it may have been. To expand the contact, it became necessary to establish humanitarian services in the areas, but the government was hampered by limited funds, materials and lack of roads.

The establishment of medical facilities in Ganta and Zorzor was therefore a milestone in the development of better human relations between the government on the coast and its people in the interior. However, these hospitals served very little useful purpose without adequate trained personnel to operate them.

Consequently, one group of professional persons who "forged new territories for others to follow" and "carried profound changes in the culture" of the land were Liberian nurses who made the sacrifices and went into the interior to work.

These angels of mercy began their inroads into the interior in the early administration of Edwin Barclay with the construction of the G. W. Harley Hospital in Sanniquellie and the Curran Hospital in Zorzor.

In order to train nurses and other medical staff to man those hospitals the Lutheran Mission set up a training center in Harrisburg known as the Muhlenburg Lutheran Mission. Here girls were trained in the nursing profession while men were schooled as Lab Technicians. Upon graduation few of them were selected for practice in Monrovia while the others had the option of traveling into the interior to practice at the newly established hospitals there. Among the graduate nurses who opted to go to Zorzor were Irene Oshoko, Elizabeth Peabody, Frances Dukuly and Doris Clinton. These were nurses like Esther Bacon, a pioneer in the field, who dedicated their lives and service for others.

According to Nurse Elizabeth Peabody who I talked to years after her retirement, those were the hardship days. She said she had a brief ride from Monrovia to Kakata and thereafter "it was on foot all the way." She said that "sometimes when I got tired, I was carried in a hammock, but we walked and crossed over monkey bridges from Kakata to

Sanayea and from there to Zorzor. It took us almost a week to reach Zorzor," she recalled. Her narration was like reading Graham Greene's JOURNEY WITHOUT MAP. In her case, she and her Nurse companions were not exploring the unknown, they were going into the unknown to extend the health delivery service of the government to its people. They were pioneers seeking to create a better life for the people in the interior.

Asked what it was like in Zorzor in those days, she said that she found that the principal ailment in those days were yaws and hernia. Malaria was not prevalent, she recalled; however, quinine was the pill used to treat malaria at the time while Bismuth was used for yaws infection. "There were no miracle drugs at the time," referring to penicillin. She said they relied heavily on Ross Life Pills. "In Zorzor we were out of touch with civilization. We used the gas lantern to carry on operations at the hospital at nights and it took four weeks for ships to arrive in Monrovia from the United States and another four weeks for cargo to reach Zorzor traveling by road. You either traveled through Bopolu or through Kakata."

Working in the interior in those days was not an attractive venture. It was more of a pioneering exercise; but interestingly enough it was the women who made the sacrifice. Men who left the coast and traveled interiorward did so on official missions or went as government emissary traveling with soldiers. There were others who were in search of diamonds and gold or just prospecting. These women as nurses and teachers who made the first inroads into the interior were the forerunners of the human face of a government. They were the harbingers of mercy, the trailblazers who went to soothe the pain and heal the wounds. They were the confidence-builders; they made the human contacts which gave government a human face to the interior dwellers. It was their sacrifices and their interaction with the people in the interior that were confidence building. They were the long distance runners of the 20th century whose staying power against heavy odds gave us something empowering to remember.

Nurse Elizabeth Peabody spent only two years in Zorzor returning to the coast in 1936. She spent two years in Marshall teaching before her employment at Firestone Medical Center in Dusse where a vacancy existed for a trained Liberian nurse.

"I lived in a mud hut until the camp for nurses was constructed," she narrated. "I worked with Firestone for 12 years and was the highest paid nurse at 25.00 a month when I left in 1948 - and a good many had been employed by then," she remembered.

After leaving Firestone's employ because of ill-health nurse Peabody then continued the practice at the Liberian Government Hospital in Monrovia with a starting salary of 75.00 a month. She stayed with the government for 22 years leaving in 1972 with a 125.00 salary. Upon retirement she received a 20.00 monthly pension.

Elizabeth Peabody is used only as an example because we shared her many experiences either personally or through her own narrations. But these experiences paint the picture clearly of the sacrifices women in the nursing and teaching professions were willing to make not for enrichment but for service; not for personal advancement but more for the betterment of the nation today. They took risks, broke down barriers and forged new territories so that the rest of us would follow.

Women of influence? In deed they were. By their calling they built the confidence needed for the people to come together and repose trust and confidence in their government. They are the ones who turned their professions into inspiration and empowerment for themselves and for those they served. They were women of substance.

## DEAN ANNA E. COOPER

## Innovator and Role Model

Liberia College had become the University of Liberia in 1950 and students on the campus were enjoying their first semester, no more as College students, but University students. The recognition of the adult status of students had not yet taken roots in the community. This was immediately demonstrated by the presence of a middle-aged lady on campus. It was a bright march morning and the Dean of the University, Anna E. Cooper had strolled out of her office located in the newly built Tubman Hall to catch the view. Students milled around exchanging pleasantries, the birds sang in the plum trees spread on the campus offering shades from the sun. As she stood on the porch of Tubman Hall she recognized a lady strolling briskly up the entrance. Dean Cooper called out: "What brings you here this morning, Sister Mary?" [Real name withheld]. "Have you come to register?" She asked jokingly. But Sister Mary was not up for joke today. "Good morning, Sister Anna. I have not come to register; I've got a problem. I have come to take one of your students out of school for preginating my daughter."

[This was the existing social norm of the day. The young man who fell into the trap of impregnating one's daughter who is a school-going girl was thrown out of school. The girl also was thrown out of school.]

Dean Cooper was slightly amused but she did not show it; here was the opportunity she may have been waiting for to make a pronouncement on the recognition of the adult status of students. She did not invite the distressed visitor into her office. She chose the porch and she spoke as if she had an audience. "I am sorry, Sister Mary, we can't help you. Times have changed. This is no more a college, but a university where men and women are enrolled for higher education. We can't put anyone out for that. If your daughter is attending the University, we won't put her out for being pregnant. She may continue her education, nor can we put the young man out. Madam, this is a new day. With the establishment of the University, many social constraints have been done away with. We can't help you." The distraught lady could do nothing but thank Dean Cooper and walk away.

Only one like Dean Cooper could have so simply pronounced so profound a fundamental social change in the society without causing any fuss. And she did it because she was the reason for the University being established.

The 1862 precursor, Liberia College may not have emerged in 1951 as the University of Liberia; for while critics suggested 1962 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Liberia College, Anna E. Cooper then Dean of the College insisted NOW, meaning 1951. Persevering and intrepid in policy execution, Mrs. Cooper told the Board of Trustees at the ceremony marking the upgrading of the Tubman School of Teachers Training to the status of an autonomous four-year College of Education in 1950 that the time had arrived for the entire institution to be upgraded and that a further delay



would be robbing the country of development. This happened because Mrs. Anna Cooper had passed there once.

The Department of Science and Technology may not have been established at Liberia College in 1933 if Mrs. Cooper had not exercised conscientiousness in that field all her life. The recognition of adult status of students and obtaining external scholarships for them may not have taken root in 1934 nor the administration of universal entrance examination to standardized admission attained in 1950 if Mrs. Cooper had not been far-sighted and merit-oriented. Perhaps the first fresh green grocery of Liberian grown food-stuff might not have ignited the Tubman Green Revolution if naturalist Anna Cooper had not initiated it at Water-side along with her son James T. Philips, jr., in 1955.

Born July 22, 1897, into what has been described as a "traditional setting of gender inequity", or what Methodist Bishop Arthur Kulah referred to when he preached her funeral discourse, "she was born as a Comngo woman, she was reared and educated as a Congo woman and was taught to speak and act like a ongo woman." As such she studied at the private school of Maude A. Morris at Bromley and thence to the College of West Africa in Monrovia. When she went to CWA, many rejoiced because she was the only female accepted in what appeared to be then a male-dominated club.

When she completed CWA, efforts to cut short her educational pursuits were tremendous. So many persons wanted her hand in marriage. Telling the story at a lavish reception. President William Tolbert gave her when he conferred the distinction of Knight Official in the Humane Order of African Redemption in 1978, she told her audience: "One particularly wealthy man was so persistent he kept coming, pampering and flattering me to marry him, but I had something else more compelling which was burning in me. I had decided to gain an education....) knew I would be of use, but I did not know to what extent."

The "something burning" in her carried her across the seas in 1914 and landed her in the Central Alabama Institute in the USA to drink from the fountain of knowledge there. After a year of study she matriculated into Morgan State College Preparatory School in Baltimore and graduated from there in 1917 with distinction. She then proceeded to Howard University in Washington, D.C. and took a two-year Teachers Training Course specializing in Science. Little did she know that she was laying the foundation to becoming the torch-bearer of science education in Liberia. Records of Mrs. Cooper's academic excellence and strong character still remain exemplary values in the annals of Howard University where she earned in 1921 a Bsc. Degree.

Reportedly, patriotism gnawed at Anna Cooper's heart as maggot on completion of her study so she returned home immediately radiating with knowledge. From 1922 to 1928 she taught science at the College of West Africa, her Alma Mater. Her fame began to spread in consistent ripples as an August educator, erudite scientist and a disciplinarian. In 1929 she was appointed professor of Science at Liberia College, now University of Liberia where she remained imparting scientific knowledge and mould-

ing characters of the youths until 1931 when she returned to the United States for further studies.

This was in line with her belief that “knowledge itself is endless and if you want to remain on top of things, you have to pursue it endlessly..” Adding, “I learned from experience that you have to keep filling in the gap. Seminars and workshops are some of the best out of school means of learning for professionals. I have worked with these systems and they have helped me a lot. You find out that text books are often rewritten as new ideas on the same subjects learned have changed. New means are developed constantly; so keep visiting knowledge anywhere you may find it.”

It was this determination to pursue knowledge “endlessly” that took Mrs. Cooper back into the classroom of the Teachers College of Columbia University resulting in her obtaining a Masters of Science degree. This equipped her with the intellectual tool to return home this time in 1933 to organize the Science Department of Liberia College.

Seventeen years later in 1950, Mrs. Cooper had proven her competence and was thus elevated as Dean of Administration of Liberia College.

Mrs. Cooper, however, did not restrict her services to educational activities alone. She was active in such organizations as the Young Women Christian Association, Antoinette Tubman Child Welfare Center, Advisory Board of the YWCA Hostel, CWA and many others.

Mrs. Cooper was born and grew up in a male-dominated society.

She was one of the first girls who broke the education barrier and moved up beyond the fifth grade. When she stood on the LU campus that March morning and made a declaration in recognition of the adult status of students, she was making a direct statement to the female population: “Learn to say no to the men. To excel in a world dominated by male chauvinism, put education first. The empowerment of women does not rest alone in her vagina, but more in the development of her intellect.”

It was also a defining moment in the role the University was cut out to play in providing equal opportunity for all regardless of gender in the educational field. Child bearing would no longer be a bar to a female who sought continuing education. Nor would a male be penalized for impregnating a girl by being put out of school.

Mrs. Cooper was fearless and forceful in the defence of her rights. An example of this is illustrated when she returned home after the 1980 coup in which her son, J.T. Philips, a Cabinet Minister was executed. Against the advice of her friends and relatives Dean Cooper returned home to find the anti-congo fever at its height. Properties were being confiscated, accusations were thrown at the Congo people and in some cases their homes had been occupied by soldiers or members of the ruling Peoples' Redemption Council. Not only did she find her son among the fallen, but some of her properties seized by the Military Regime. Perhaps being mindful of the Wolo v. Wolo case, she requested a meeting with the Head of State Samuel Doe and demanded her property back. “You kill my son and now you have taken my property, for what, Mr.

Head of State? What have I done?" She asked. "If that is the case you may as well kill me too because I will not let you take away my property and property rights." Flabbergasted and flustered, Doe, on the other hand, was perhaps unmindful of the fact that Wolo v. Wolo had empowered women of their rights in this country. and he was unaware that not even the arbitrary power of a military government was strong enough to dampen the wrath of a woman wronged. He was taken aback, but turned to his aides and retorted: "Your leave this Congo woman alone and give Ma back her property."

Dean Anna Cooper passed away in 1988 at a period when many of her beneficiaries were out of the country and could not pay her their last respect. However, Methodist Bishop Arthur Kulah paid her glowing tribute for being a "true servant of God". Mr. Cooper was the quintessential of a Congo Woman. Therefore the Bishop chose as his topic: "Well Done, Congo Woman!" Then he went on to define what is really meant by Congo. "There is no doubt," he said, "that the people we often call Congo people were the ones who settled this country and gave us a sense of nationhood. There is no doubt that those we refer to as Congoes are the ones who worked so hard, toiled days and nights, made many sacrifices, spent many sleepless nights just to plan and develop this country and have brought us to where we are today. There is no doubt that most of the men and women from the interior and coastal areas of Liberia got their education through the recommendations, support, and contributions, and even the sacrifices of the people we often call Congo people.

There is no doubt that the people we call Congoes were the ones who brought Christianity to this soil Well Done, Congo Woman. Yes, Sister Anna E. Cooper was a Congo Woman, and she was very proud to be one. She was an honest and a trusted Congo Woman, and as such, her peers always elected her to keep the money of any organization she was a member of. She was a dedicated and committed Congo Woman. She worked very hard and was always concerned about her business. As one of the pioneers on the field of higher education in Liberia, she taught many men and women who are now serving our beloved country a its" people. As Dean of Liberia College (now University of Liberia), she brought to the college a deep and abiding sense of administrative skills, commitment dedication and deep level of honesty."

## SUSAN BERRY

Woman Activist; Dynamic Labor Leader

When I began this exercise and started researching on the influential Liberian women of this century, most persons I talked to and asked to suggest some names, the name Susan Berry always came up. I knew Susan Berry and respected her a lot, but it never occurred to me that she ranked among the top 25 Liberian women of this century. I

knew her to be a humanitarian, a teacher and an energetic social worker. She ran a school and at her death she willed most of her property to the Susan Berry School in Congotown.

I knew her also to be a woman who moved within the circles of the high and mighty. The story is told that on the night when an attempt was made on the life of President Edwin Barclay in 193-, he was leaving her home up Camp Johnson Hill now Capitol Hill where he had a tryst with her. Not only did she move in high circles, but she had learned the ways of the mighty. In my search I found Susan Berry to be a strong-minded woman who stood up for what was right. As a member of the Board of Trustees of the United Methodist Church she called Mac DeShield to account. McKinley A. DeShield was a powerful man in the society in the days of the Tubman Era. He was the Secretary General of the True Whig Party and a leading member of the United Methodist Church in Monrovia. The Methodist Church has always been in charge of the J. J. Roberts Educational Foundation. At that time the Foundation was not as active as it is now. There were other uses for the Foundation's income - uses which no one outside the Church knew about or could demand accountability. Some of this money, however, went towards the support of the J. J. Roberts Night School and the support of the Susan Berry School. Suddenly, however, the allotment for Susan Berry was cut off without any explanation. Susan Berry became furious and demanded a Board meeting. At the meeting she asked for a reason for cutting off the funds. DeShield felt that this was not in her purview. Susan Berry took DeShield to task and demanded accountability pointing out that in the absence of accountability, lies the suspicion of something fishy happening. She did not have her way that day, but she cut DeShield down to size. She became known as a giant killer.

Susan Berry, however, made her name in the society as a dynamic labor leader. This is hardly believable because she mounted the stage of labor leadership at a time when the labor union in the country was male dominated with a negligible female membership. "It was because of her dynamism and her knowledge of the workings of the political leadership of the country at the time that we decided to elect her as our leader; make no mistake she was not a figurehead," the veteran labor leader Amos Gray explained. In other words, it seemed that the labor union which was struggling to gain government's favor was attempting to use the influence of Susan Berry. But this is hardly the case since it had the President's son in its leadership and the President's one time Executive Secretary, Emmett Harmon as among the leaders.

Those were difficult times and the Labor Unions in the country were not only fighting for national recognition by the various employment organizations in the country, but it was campaigning for the rights of workers throughout the country and for those rights to be respected by all. In this context, many of the Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) had not been ratified by the Liberian Government and this needed to be addressed. In 1965 Susan Berry headed the Liberian delegation to Geneva to attend the regular meeting of the ILO. In her address before

that body, Susan Berry did not mince her words. She attacked the government for dragging its feet on ratifying the Conventions and then went on to declare that "Except for legalized discrimination in South Africa their working conditions were far better than in any other African country." Susan Berry was hailed in Geneva as the champion of the rights of workers in Africa. The speech made headlines in many international papers and this disturbed the security agents in Liberia. As she stepped down from the podium a little girl presented her with a red rose. When she left the Hall, she immediately went and posted a copy of her speech to President Tubman who was then on holiday in Zurich.

After receiving her accolades she and her delegation returned home and immediately were summoned to the Justice Department. In the presence of the then Attorney General J. Dossen Richards and the powerful Director of SSS C. Wellington Campbell, she was shown the copy of a newspaper in Zurich headlining her speech. Campbell brandished the newspaper and asked her if she made that speech. Susan Berry looked at the two in disdain and asked with contempt: "Is that what you have called us here for? When I had finished making my speech I mailed a copy to President Tubman in Zurich." Thus suggesting that had she said anything seditious the President already knew about it therefore as far as she was concerned they were incompetent to question her. Then turning to the other members of her group she said: "Gentlemen, let's get out of here; if these people don't have work to do, I have". She took her bag and walked out leaving the Minister and his Security Director sitting agaped. This was Susan Berry; diminutive in stature, but empowering in action. She made a significant difference in life. She gave us something empowering to remember. She did not give a damn!

Following that speech the government ratified a number of ILO Conventions, improved its working relations with labor unions and urged Concessions and other business entities in the country to treat the labor unions as an indispensable arm in the development process of nation building.

### EUGENIA SIMPSON-COOPER

She broke ground for female empowerment

Eugenia Simpson-Cooper was an up-river girl. She was born in Clay-Ashland where the Simpsons come from. When she was sent to Monrovia to School she was fortunate and had a place to live with her relatives. There were other girls who were not so fortunate and as time went on this situation became a problem in the Monrovia community.

Mrs. Eugenia Simpson-Cooper, now a teacher at the College of West Africa, and a Member of the Board felt the need to do something to fill this need. The girls who

came from far to attend school and knew no one in Monrovia found housing for girls to be a problem. Mrs. Cooper therefore prevailed upon the authorities of the Methodist Church and the College of West Africa to set up a Girls' Hostel. She wanted a place which was adequate, suitable and conducive for girls growing up; a place that would offer them home training and Christian discipline. Thus the establishment and construction of the first hostel for girls in Monrovia known as the Methodist Girls' Hostel in Sinkor on Tubman Boulevard. These girls did not come from up the river alone, some came from the leeward counties while others from the interior.

Many young girls from Methodist Elementary Schools in other parts of the country and desirous of furthering their studies lived at the Girls' Hostel and most of them turned out to be useful citizens and productive wives.

This was one of the many contributions of Eugenia Simpson-Cooper. She was far-sighted and demonstrated an abiding faith in the youths of this country and the need to have them given the proper training. Today, many parents and young girls lament the closure of the Girls' Hostel; many are left to blush unseen, unhoused and undisciplined, unschooled in the ways of home training while leaving their sweetness in the desert air or crying in the wilderness of temptation and sin.

The Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) also constructed and ran a Hostel in Congotown, and as Mrs. Eugenia Simpson-Cooper was a member of that board obviously her concern for the welfare of the young girls in the community was evident.

Mrs. Cooper, however, did not limit her interest to the shelter of girls. Aunt Gene, as she was affectionately called, was an innovator, and a teacher. She felt a need to give the girls in the country not just an education, but make education an empowering factor in their lives. In this direction she established and became the Principal of the first commercial institute for girls known as the Community Commercial School. They learned office discipline, they were trained in stenography which were the first step up the ladder of executive professionalism. It was a challenging period in the nation. President Tubman had just begun his Open Door Policy; Concessions and other companies were coming in and needed secretaries and executive assistant. However, there were but a few and they were all employed by the Government. Even in the government there was a scarcity. Men were serving as clerks - and this was a glorified job at the time. Eugenia Simpson-Cooper changed all that. She trained young girls in stenography, taught them secretarial science and for many it was a great leap forward out of the kitchen into the offices.

This innovative effort on Mrs. Cooper's part created a chain reaction which led to the creation, and ready implementation of, the Liberianization policy in that field of professionalism. Many Concessions which had brought in secretaries were forced to limit their tenure in the country because once it was proven that a Liberian was found qualified and available she replaced the expatriate. Many young Liberian girls gained

employment at the Ore Mining Concessions as a result of their training under Aunt Gene.

When the University of Liberia was established in 1951, Mrs. Cooper was called upon to head the B. J. K. Anderson School of Business. She was a leader among a class of women who dedicated their services to the promotion and empowerment of Liberian girls. Thelma Reeves was one of them; she headed the Mary Ann Cheeseman School of Home and Domestic Arts. These two Schools under the University of Liberia were financed by the Point Four Program now known as USAID. Under the program girls were recruited from all parts of the country and brought to Monrovia to study home and domestic arts, learning to crochet, to bake and . While the B. J. K. Anderson school trained both men and women as clerks, accountants, bookkeepers and business administrators. After training, these girls returned to their home town and opened Home Economics Classes teaching local girls. This was the empowerment of women in action at the grassroots level.

It would be inexcusable to speak of Eugenia Simpson-Cooper without giving mention and ample recognition to Thelma T. Reeves, Director of the Mary Ann Cheeseman School of Home and Domestic Arts, Laura Norman, who was principal of Lab High and Elizabeth Collins, Principal of Peoples' College. (All these Schools were under the aegis of the University of Liberia at its incipency. This was intended as a continuing education program for grown-ups who had missed the boat.)

These women were pioneers in the educational field and caused profound changes in culture of work and profession. Indeed, they epitomized the motto of the University of Liberia - *Lux In Tenebris* - by taking the light of education into the darkness of the minds of our female youths and empowering them in the field of home arts, domestic science, business, office and home management. These were influential women of Liberia in this century. *Time Magazine* (April 21, 1997, edition) noted that "powerful people twist your arm. Influential people just sway your thinking." These women by their action and their lives swayed our thoughts and our way of life. They walked the walked; inspiring others to dig down deep and to do better. They forged new territories for others to follow; their ideas were adopted; their examples followed and they gained exceptional power in their profession, becoming role models and making significant difference in the lives of others as well as in the life of the nation.

### MAGDALENE COOPER - DENNIS

Nurse - She Diverted The Stream of Human History

Magdalene Dennis left her footprints in the sands of time. They can never be erased. She was called the Florence Nightingale of Liberia. Once when she appeared on the

stage with the President of Liberia the applause for her rang the loudest and lasted the longest.

Maggie Dennis, as she was affectionately called, was one of three sisters - Anna E. Cooper and C. A. King - whose services to the nation have been described as "valuable." Anna E Cooper was an Educationalist; C. A. King, the wife of former President C. D. B. King, a States-woman while Sis Maggie was daubed a Humanitarian, a lover of life.. They all attended Bromley Mission before matriculating to the College of West Africa in Monrovia. These three sisters shine as bright stars in the firmament of national development and growth.

In 1921, Maggie went abroad for professional training, graduating from Lincoln School for Nurses in New York, and later from the famous Bellevue Hospital for Obstetrics. Upon her return in 1925, she became Nurse in Charge at the Government Hospital which had been newly built on Crown Hill near the French Cable. After serving for a considerable period Maggie was appointed Superintendent of Nurses at the Carrie V. Dwyer Memorial Hospital commonly called the Baptist Hospital. This is where she made her name, serving with "efficiency and credit," mapping a new course in nursing care and, as historian Nathaniel Richardson points out in his *LIBERIA: Past and Present*, "Many mothers today are indebted to this good woman."

To appreciate Maggie Dennis and her accomplishment, we find it necessary and useful to go back and picture what were the medical conditions of the country before she came on the scene. In the late 20s and early thirties, there were only two hospitals in Monrovia - the government hospital and the Baptist hospital. There were, of course, quite a number of clinics - Dr. Fuzic, a German doctor, Dr. Schnitzer, also of German origin on Broad Street and Doctor Lawrence, the father of the late Ambassador Dudley Lawrence on Carey Street. There were also the Curran Hospital in Zorzor and the Harvey Hospital in Sanniquellie. Because of the bad road conditions or the lack of adequate travel these health delivery units were not easily accessible. Citizens living in the rural areas suffered immensely. Those who lived in settlements up the river and took ill, relied on riverboats to transport them into Monrovia in case of an emergency. So it was with women in childbirth.

In order to arrest the situation there were Grannies in each community who served as what is today known as Midwives. There were also trained male nurses called Dressers. (They were so called because they usually attended to sores and yaws which were numerous in those days). As for the grannies when a woman was in labor they were summoned to perform miracles or the possible. In many instances this would take place most dramatically at night. With lantern in hand and a boy or girl by their side, they would walk hurriedly to the home where the pregnant mother was in agonizing labor, put the water on the fire and start their work. The screams of the woman in labor would pierce the night. If the labor goes well, it is a job well done. If not, the screams turned into the cry of death. Many babies were lost in towns, villages and other communities. In the village, the exercise was about the same except the grannies



were called the Zoes who attended the mothers. Taking care of the babies in the face of mosquitoes, unsafe drinking water and poor sanitary conditions compounded the situation.

Few survived, but many did not make it. Maggie Dennis changed all this. She diverted the stream of human history in the field of childbearing and child care in Liberia. She led her collaborators in the introduction of the concept of Midwives' Council where women in the various villages, towns and cities were trained into dealing with maternal nursing. This innovative move on her part reduced the infant mortality rate; she redeemed many unborn children from the scourge of ignorance in childbearing. Thus rightly placing herself among the ranks of those into the Humane Order of African Redemption.

One of Maggie Dennis' collaborators is the veteran nurse Jemima Graff who is now retired and feeble. However, she was asked to tell us how this concept of setting up Midwives Council came about. She said that the concept originated in England and it was communicated to Mrs. Dennis who along with other nurses adopted and developed it on a national scale. Throughout the interior the concept was developed. One of her collaborators was Alice Peabody who headed the Midwives Council in the Gbarnga area. From village to village Midwives were groomed in the art of maternal care. This concept put into practice considerably reduced the mortality rate in child birth throughout the country. The name Maggie Dennis became synonymous to child health care in Liberia. She raised the bar in her field and caused profound changes in culture and profession by making child bearing less cumbersome.

At one time Maggie Dennis became disillusioned and maybe discouraged by the numerous drawbacks which beset the way of progress in developing countries. Turning to one of her collaborators, Mrs. Charlotte Bedell, she cried, "Charlotte, let's work for humanity; this is God's work." Recalling the incident, Charlotte Bedell burst out saying: "Maggie Dennis did good for the Liberian women, ooh! She worked hard; every health delivery institution in the country, her hand was inside.. She helped organize the Catherine Mills Rehabilitation Center, (a modern psychiatric hospital before the 1980 coup). She was behind the setting up of the Home for Orphaned and Disabled Children."

These activities and her involvement were achieved at the sacrifice of her domestic life which gradually crumbled resulting in the dissolution of her marriage. She had seen the sufferings of the Liberian women; she had traveled the length and breadth of the country and had seen their needs. It was a time when the mentally ill walked the streets of Monrovia naked or were seen bathing in puddles of water on the side of the road as little children looked on. Those were the days of great sufferings in this country.

Every year there was a Midwives' Convention where notes were exchanged regarding individual experiences in child care and new methods were shared and discussed. Maggie Dennis did it all.

Speaking at the graduation of Nurses in year President Tubman paid tribute to Maggie Dennis and admonished the graduates that "Each of you should be prepared to go out and follow the example of Magdalene Cooper who, I am happy to observe at the Midwives Convention, was given loud and extended applause when her name was called. As she came to the platform she received applause and acclaim even greater than that given to the President. This is an indication of the high place of recognition for contribution and service rendered the nursing profession by this eminent female nurse."

Tubman went on to offer few advice to the graduates if they wanted to walk in the path of the "eminent female nurse:"

1. Be a human being filled with the milk of human kindness, compassion, sympathy and understanding.
2. Strive to be *the* nurse, not just another nurse.
3. Strive for excellence at all times.
4. Dedicate yourselves in word and deed to the work which you have to do.

He concluded by observing that they should be proud of the task of a nurse because "by your knowledge and skill you help to herald into the world each day a citizen, a newcomer endowed with all the God-given potentialities."

Every time a safe delivery is made in this country today, we say thank you to Maggie Dennis who, in addition, was a thing of exceptional beauty.

Today, the Carrie V. Dyer Memorial Hospital stands idle; the Catherine Mills Rehab Center is in ruin, but the blue-print left by Maggie Dennis remains for others to build on and restore those institutions for which she and others so sacrificially struggled to build for the advancement of the Liberian people.

### ANGIE BROOKS-RANDALL

#### She Mid-wifed Trust Territories To Self-Determination

In 1952, Liberia was still a male dominated society where the women's role was limited to teaching in the schools, carrying on secretarial duties in offices and home care. The gender was wide and seemed unbridgeable. No female had broken the political barrier except Mrs. Etta Wright who in the early sixties was appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Militia Affairs.

It was in such a society that Angie Brooks entered when she returned from school in the United States loaded with a string of degrees and honors in law and international relations. Her CV raised the eyebrows of politicians while many young men secretly considered her a threat to their positions. What should be done with such a qualified female without demonstrating male chauvinism or gender partiality? President Tubman and other high officials in government pondered the matter. Finally, it

was decided that Mrs. Brooks should join the corp of lawyers in the Justice Department as one of the Assistant Attorneys General. However, this did not seem to go well with Christian A. Cassell, then ministerial head of the Department. After about a year in the Justice Department, Mrs. Brooks was transferred to the State Department as it was then known.

There at the Ministry Angie became the first woman to act as President. Tubman left the city and in the absence of the Secretary of State and his deputy, she acted as President under a Letter Patent.

In 1954 Mrs. Brooks was appointed a member of the Liberian delegation to the Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. There at the UN she was assigned to the Fourth Committee responsible for UN Trusteeship. Mrs. Brooks performed so brilliantly on that Committee that for the next years she attended every UN General Assembly session and served on that Committee as chairperson until her ascension to the Presidency of the General Assembly.

It was at the helm of this Committee that Angie made her mark on international affairs. She became the mid-wife for most African territories under UN Trusteeship monitoring their progress towards selfdetermination and independence. She kept Liberia on the cutting edge of the wind of change in Africa and the world fighting to eradicate colonialism. She presided over the independence of Togo, Ruanda, Burundi and the Cameroun. She also played a role in taking South Africa before the World Court on the issue of Namibia.

Her activities and her role stand out prominently because at that time there were only few women at the United Nations representing their governments.

Mrs. Brooks left Liberia in the late forties to pursue higher education after a failed marriage to Richard A. Henries. He had divorced her because, according to local gossip, "her feet were too big." But this was the defining moment in her life. She had graduated from High School as the valedictorian of her class at Lott Carey. Her dream to excell had been interrupted by the marriage to Richard Henries. The marriage having proven unsuccessful, she did not give up but decided to pursue her education further. Her "big feet" therefore took her to the United States into Raleigh, North Carolina, thence to the University of Wisconsin and later to the University of London. At these institutions she earned her bachelor degree, Master of Science in political science and international relations, respectively. She was the second Liberian woman on record to hold a law degree.

When she left Liberia for studies abroad Angie was determined to return home and make an impact in what was then a male-dominated society; and not only did she succeed, but she rose to outshine a score of Liberian diplomatic luminaries which glistened on the horizon at the time. There were Ambassador Nathan Barnes, J. Emery Knight, Henry Ford Cooper, John Cox, John Grigsby and others. She excelled them all and rose to preside over the World Body in 1969.

## EDITH MAI PADMORE

## A Prototype of the Career Personality

When the final chapter of the Tubman Administration is written, the name Mai Padmore will litter the pages like on a ticker tape parade. For while politicians were squabbling who should succeed President Tubman as he lay on his death bed in a London Clinic, Mai Padmore, as Special Assistant to the President in the office of the seat of power, transcended the the mundane pre-occupation of political uncertainty in that period of transition and kept the government functioning administratively. She is credited with having played a major role in holding things together. "Had there been an ambitious man occupying that post, undoubtedly, Liberian history would have taken a different course on July 23, 1971. The Cabinet, which was meeting at the Executive Mansion at the time, would have been out-maneuvered without their knowing it," a Chief player during the transition revealed.

"In 1965," according to the Official Gazette Extraordinary published by the Government on the occasion of her death, "President Tubman, seeing the selflessness, commitment and honesty exemplified by Mrs. Padmore, demonstrated his confidence in her by creating the position of Special Assistant to the President to which she was immediately appointed." From that day onward to and even after his demise, Mrs. Padmore as Special Assistant ran the Government of Liberia. She demonstrated in a transparent way the capability of a woman to efficiently run the affairs of state.

Who, then, was Mai Padmore? Who was this woman "who so ably blended home and office affairs," while remaining at the same time "a devoted wife and mother?"

Interestingly, the Official Gazette above referred to, describes her as a "brilliant student who excelled in all of her academic pursuits. " The story goes that the only other member of her class of 1934 at CWA was the late Roger Cecil Steel, Sr. He wanted to be the first of the class, and resented the fact that she took first. He therefore did not appear on graduation day and never received his diploma. This demonstrates how stiff academic competition was in those days. The society was also heavily male-dominated even in our psychic. phenomenon.

In her pursuit at professionalism, Mai Padmore attended and successfully graduated from the Eugenia Simpson-Cooper Secretarial School and the Gazette notes, "her years spent at that school were not wasted. Her mastery of stenography, coupled with her excellent grounding in English and her capacity to work, earned her a number of coveted assignments." She was consequently, a worthy ambassador of the first Secretarial School established in the country.

Born 1916 into a "well-to-do" family in Monrovia - her father was Stanley Wiles, once Speaker of the House of Representatives and her mother, F.Mai Wiles, was sister of the late Chief Justice Louis Arthur Grimes, and one of the first women to graduate from Liberia College.

Obviously she was taught the essence of humility and how to humble oneself. No matter who went into her office on official business, Mrs. Padmore always demonstrated patience, calm and pleasant disposition.

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, *Before the Palm Could Bloom* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: New Issues Press, 1998), 86 pp.

and

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, *Becoming Ebony* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 79 pp.

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley's first book of verse, *Before the Palm Could Bloom*, expresses a profound sense of suffering, loss, endurance, and death. Poets are forever keen to reflect on that which enables them to write poetry. And, in this book, Patricia has reflected on her past, present, and future. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this book is its genesis. Ostensibly inspired by her cultural heritage and the Liberian civil war that lasted for fourteen years, the book is divided into three sections. Students of war and humanity will be depressed by the contents of the book. A book has that effect when its primary purpose is to record the atrocities of an interethnic civil war in which the "child soldier" reigns unequivocally supreme. That's war up close and personal.

Section I of *Before the Palm Could Bloom* contains memorable poems such as "I Am Not Dekuah," "Tugbakeh: A Song," "The Storm," "Child Soldier," "Finding My Family," "War Children," "Warrior," and "Have You Been Felled?" "Oh Rivers: Nov. 7, 1995, and "what Dirge." The first poem in Section I, "I Am Not Dekuah," is a blatant refutation of the traditional African belief in reincarnation.

The speaker in the poem is a baby that pleads that it isn't a reincarnated child that periodically goes through the life-and-death cycle. Rather, it has been born to live, so the parents should not mourn. They should rejoice. In "Tugbakeh: A Song," the speaker seems to bemoan the fate of the inhabitants of a town, who have fled to refugee camps because of an inter-ethnic civil war. "The Storm" paints a brief scenario in which a war victim takes sanctuaries in various forms: as a crab, a snail, and a leech. "Child Soldier," the poem from which the superb title of the collection is derived, presents the wailing of the bereaved for young boys who, in the throes of a civil war, kill their fathers and end up dying themselves. The rest of the poems in Section I reflect on the poet's past, present, and future.

In Section II, the poem, "To Bai Jabbeh," is a depiction of an old man telling tales, including the story of the World War II. The poem is very descriptive. It shows a toothless, old man sitting on an old chair as a child sits at his feet. "*I sat to his wobbling chair; / Bai waved away flies/and baptized us with saliva of wisdom, / spinning up another leg of a tale.*" "This Rooster Will Come Home to Roost" is a metaphor for the prodigal son or daughter, who has led the life of a vagabond or wastrel and finally returns home to the open and forgiving arms of the parents. Again the rest of the poems in this section is a reflection on the poet's past, present, and future.

In Section III, the poet continues in the same tone as in Sections I and II. In the poem, "One of These Days," the speaker hopes for a better future when the inter-ethnic war finally ends. There will be tears of joy as well as tears of sorrow. Even the inhabitants of Monrovia, the capital, will sing and dance on "Independence Day", which is celebrated each year on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. In "When I Get to Heaven," the speaker's tone is a happy one. Although men and women of all races and color will finally mingle as brothers and sisters in heaven, the speaker still intends to behave and do things the African way. The lines, *"I'll paint my face with white chalk and red rock, / sit with missionaries so all can see"* seem to suggest that in heaven apartheid or racism will be done away with. In "Homecoming" the speaker echoes the same message of "This Rooster Will Come Home to Roost." Indeed, there is a biblical aura about "Homecoming." The prodigal son or daughter would not want to be treated like a stranger. Rather, he/she would like to be welcomed by all members of the family.

The poems in Patricia Wesley's second book, *Becoming Ebony*, read like the work of a great poet. Many of the poems in this book are further explorations of the poet's roots, attempts to define the rural and urban life of Liberia that she was once part and parcel of. The title of the book indirectly reflects this earlier rootedness in a way of life grimly dependent on making the best of the soil, but it also defines an autobiographical difference with which several of the poems are concerned. The title has a symbolic and moral value. Just as the ebony tree becomes useful eventually as an item of household fixture, so too, in death the speaker in the poem will live in posterity.

The book is arranged in four sections. The first poem in Section I, "My Birth at the Doorpost," inevitably celebrates the poet's birth and her desire to be a free spirit by not being born in the traditional way. Lines in the last stanzas of the poem, *"If they had asked me, I would / have come out legs first, then hands before head, / So I can run away from home someday / suggest that the speaker wants to be a free spirit."* Section I contains a number of memorable poems such as "I Used to Own This Town" and "Get Out of Here, Boys!" These poems seem to bemoan the loss of the innocence and naiveté of childhood in the throes of a devastating civil war in Liberia. In the latter poem, a child's play of a make-believe war is gradually transformed into a real scene of a civil crisis in the speaker's homeland.

*Becoming Ebony* is full of arresting observations and sudden phrases of memorable beauty. For example, in "This is What I Tell My Daughter," a line such as *"bringing home sad trophies in teen arms"*, has an insightful, moral ring to it, so are the lines, *"The child that wanders comes home only to graves,"* in the poem "Coming Home to Iyeeh", and *"... before our years were ambushed into memory,"* in the poem, "Around the Mountain." These exquisite turns of phrases remain indelibly printed on the mind long after the reader has put down the book.

But elsewhere, too often the poet takes out pencil and notepad to tell us what she and her family experienced in a refugee camp in Liberia. For example, in "For My Husband," the speaker evokes the reader's sympathy in narrating how the family is

being reduced to skeletons as a result of starvation. The speaker and the family eat food that isn't fit for human consumption. But they sustain each other with laughter, humour, and companionship. The poem shows the poet with an equable temper. The poem is essentially a metonym for suffering. "For Marie Antoinette" and "For Robert Frost" not only give the volume a universal appeal, but they also tell us what the speaker reads as well as where her interest lies.

*Becoming Ebony* is a remarkable book of exquisite gravity and serious charm and beauty. It balances an acute sense of the value of art and intellect with an imaginative sympathy. It is filled with serious poetry written with a touch so deft and graceful that turning its pages is, indeed a pleasure. The book is littered with poems of astonishing beauty and exquisite turns of phrases. This is poetry of quiet, personal insight and universal appeal. It is sad to have had Liberian rebels and warlords celebrated worldwide, while such an essential poet like Patricia Jabbeh Wesley remains barely known in Liberia.

When Patricia Jabbeh Wesley published her first collection of poems, *Before the Palm Could Bloom* in 1998, she had already forged her distinctive style, and it has remained largely unchanged. Although in her poetry she reflects on her past, present, and future, her particular obsession is the Liberian civil war, and her diction reflects this: *child soldier*, *war children*, *finding my family*, *warrior*, and so on. Patricia's poetry can be described as humming with simplicity and wisdom.

She incorporates Liberian proverbs and idioms into her poetry in such a way as to make the cultural context vivid and compelling for both her Liberian and non-Liberian readers. Her poetry frequently breaks free into lyricism. Indeed, her poetry seems to ask the question which Heidegger re-introduced into philosophy. "Why is there something rather than nothing?" She succeeds in answering this question. Despite the profound philosophical depth of her poetry, she is accessible at first reading, and her languorous and winsome style might catch the fancy in the way that e. e. cummings once did, offering lashings of winter, and "the darling buds of May" or spring in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

It is common knowledge that African writers, when writing in English, maintain a distinct African style. Thus, the importance of imagery and proverbs in African oral tradition is carried over in Patricia's poetry. Her use of imagery and proverbs are aspects of her style traceable to the African oral tradition. The title of her first collection, *Before the Palm Could Bloom*, is a fine example of symbolic imagery. The proverb may be applied to any situation where it may fit. The image it creates is a generalized, stable message clothed in the garb of a particular situation. For example, in the poem, "Wandering Child," the Grebo proverb, "The child that wanders will not know her mother's grave," the reader has an image not just of the character of the child, but of her loose ties with her family-in particular, with her mother, who has died in her absence. The reader also has an image of her loose ties to traditional Liberian culture that are part and parcel of her family's cognitive system. Then too, in the poem, "To:



Bai Jabbeh," she describes the atrocities of Hitler and World War II. In this poem, the imagery of old men telling tales with morals, illustrates that old age is the repository of wisdom.

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley uses proverbs as an expression of that thought mode and as an attempt to communicate the connotative aspects or emotional overtones of Liberian life not only as an adornment to her poetry. Rather, she inlays them in the organic structure of her poetry. The proverb is a key element of oral African literature. Its teaching characteristics are inherent in its short epigrammatic form that isn't influenced by a performer's variations. The proverb is a carrier of the philosophy and thought-patterns of African culture in general and Liberian culture in particular. Thus, its use carries levels of meaning apart from its primary message. To count all of Patricia Jabbeh Wesley's figures of speech, images, and proverbs would be to count just about every thought in her poetry. The inevitable fact is that these carry varying levels of meaning in the varying "picture concepts" which they provide in the reader's mind. However dissimilar in titles, *Before the Palm Could Bloom* and *Becoming Ebony* share contents and tone that characterize the current moment of Liberia's history as a turning point. Patricia Jabbeh Wesley is, quite simply, one of the finest African poets today.

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Beyan, Amos J. *African American Settlements in West Africa: John Brown Russwurm and the American Civilizing Efforts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

As W. E. B. Du Boise wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* blacks in America experience a “twoness” a contradictory assimilation of two warring elements within themselves as a result of living in a society as colonized subjects. Historically, to a certain extent, African-American elites or intellectuals have manifested this ambivalent twoness most acutely or at least have been more articulate in expressing it. It is this very class of Westernized blacks who, to paraphrase the South African writer Can Themba, have approached the doors of white civilization at its highest levels that it has to offer and have heard a gruff no or a yes so shaky and insincere that they withdraw their snails horns at once.

The life of John Brown Russwurm typifies this ritualistic snail horn dance. *African American Settlements in West Africa*, by Amos Beyan, is essentially an intellectual history of the Pan-Africanist John Russwurm’s (1799-1851) life in West Africa, specifically Liberia. Professor Beyan analyzes Russwurm’s life and accomplishments in Liberia against the backdrop of African-American colonization in Liberia and its attendant social contradictions.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the American Colonization Society (ACS) and Maryland State Colonization Society (MSCS) both facilitated African American colonization movements to Liberia resulting in the founding of Liberia in 1822 and Maryland in Liberia in 1833. Colonization not only entailed the physical removal of free blacks to west African soil but, also, the expansion of “civilization” into west Africa by transferring contradictory American social and cultural values. Rejected by the USA, the spurned lovers, went to Liberia in search of an undiscovered country, a new beginning. However, what they discovered, or perhaps what they created was an inversion of American society.

Through a prism, Beyan explores Russwurm’s activities and intellectual growth in Liberia as a byproduct of his experiences in America. Contoured by his privileged education in America, Russwurm’s own identity was somewhat elitist. This helped to frame his ambivalent black nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideals on the one hand while reinforcing his acceptance of ACS paternalism in Liberia.

Defined as Negro by birth, Russwurm was, in a philosophical sense, neither black nor white. Although born to a white father and a mysterious slave mother in Jamaica, Russwurm never really experienced the kind of life that could very well have been the fate of his skin color. His father, was a Virginia merchant and apparently a man of some means. At the age of seven he sent Russwurm to Quebec for education in 1807. At the time, Quebec was a more favorable place to live for enfranchised blacks than Jamaica. It had a small but vibrant free black population that was allowed to prosper

because it did not represent any real social and economic threat to whites. Russwurm would remain in Quebec until reuniting with his father in Portland, Maine in 1812. The sojourn in Quebec was important because it allowed Russwurm to escape the racial climate of the west Indies. In Quebec his mulatto appearance gave him more freedom to socialize freely with whites. His socialization skills with whites as well as his later formal education would serve him well in Liberia, as he benefited from the graces of powerful officials of the ACS and MSCS who saw him as the vanguard of a burgeoning population of civilizing agents in Africa.

After returning to Main in 1812, Russwurm was sent to Hebron academy in 1819 and eventually attended Bowdoin college from 1824 to 1826 where he would become the third African-American to obtain a college degree. According to Beyan, this period in Russwurm's life was extremely important for it framed his world view regarding black nationalism and Pan-Africanism. While at Bowdoin Russwurm was influenced by the ideas of Virtuous Republicanism articulated by thinkers like Noah Webster, Benjamin Rush, Samuel Knox and others. Adherents of Virtuous Republicanism stressed that sovereignty in a republic should be vested in the educated and propertied classes who were the most enlightened and educated but also stood the most to gain from their civil duties.

This Virtuous Republicanism would become the foundation of Russwurm's thinking on black nationalism in Liberia and would spawn the inherent contradictions of his stance. For, in keeping with the philosophy, Russwurm would come to believe that blacks could only gain respect from Whites if they became civilized. Civilization, of course, meant assimilating ACS values that stressed Christianity and Enlightenment ideals but also paternalism towards all things African.

In the Liberian context, Russwurm's vision of Virtuous Republicanism proved to be somewhat contradictory but also consistent with his educational background. Through his various positions in the ACS colony in Monrovia and the MSCS colony in Maryland in Liberia, he accepted and condoned white political domination, with a small cadre of educated Americo-Liberians, over the majority of African-American settlers and Africans. He felt that the settlers were not educated enough yet in core republican values and that the Africans were uncivilized and savage. Although his views concerning the Africans were consistent with other African-American settlers, his acceptance of white domination was not, however. Early on in the settlement of Liberia many of the settler elite began to chafe under the authoritarianism and paternalism of the white governors of Liberia and began to agitate for more autonomy.

After matriculating at Bowdoin, Russwurm would later earn a masters degree. However, his attempt to attend medical school was stymied by racism. This retardation of his professional aspirations would mark another theme in Russwurm's Life and influence his philosophy apropos Pan-Africanism and black nationalism. Although assimilated into American culture through his education, Russwurm always felt excluded even though he was the very embodiment of a virtuous republican. This

"twoness" cyclically drove him to articulate ideas of separateness. This frustration eventually led to his support for African-American colonization in Africa at a point in time when most educated African-Americans were against it. He felt that this would be the only place where educated African-Americans could experience the full benefits of being citizens as opposed to subjects.

With his ambitions of becoming a doctor thwarted, after graduation from Bowdoin, Russwurm initially flirted with emigration to Haiti. He eventually moved, however, to New York where he established a journal called *The Freedom's Journal*. In stark contrast to his later role as editor of *The Liberia Herald* in Monrovia, *The Freedom's Journal* stridently condemned the racist social and economic structure in the United States that kept free blacks as second class citizens.

By 1829, however, perhaps due to frustration with his secondary status in the USA, Russwurm began to support the ACS colonization scheme in Liberia. For Russwurm, Liberia offered more opportunities for social and economic advancement for free blacks. In addition, Russwurm was also promised important positions within Liberia by the ACS which further stimulated his support for colonization. Russwurm's support of the ACS was very unpopular among most of the black elites, like Bishop Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Robert Douglass, and David Walker. They saw colonization as an attempt to get free blacks out of the United States as a way of further strengthening slavery in America.

Russwurm eventually left the United States bound for Liberia on 15 November 1829. Upon his arrival in Liberia he would be appointed Secretary for the colony and editor of *The Liberia Herald* by governor Mechlin. During his tenure as editor of the Herald Russwurm essentially turned the paper into the voice of the ACS leadership. He routinely printed editorials that supported the viewpoints of the governors like Mechlin and the prerogatives of ACS political domination. This incurred the wrath of many Americo-Liberian leaders.

By 1834 Mechlin had resigned under pressure and Russwurm was eventually forced out as Secretary and editor for the *Herald*. With his opportunities for advancement suppressed in Monrovia, Russwurm eventually moved to the MSCS colony of Maryland in Liberia where he would realize his fullest ambitions by becoming governor in 1836. Throughout his tenure as governor Russwurm embodied and sought to propagate republican virtues by enforcing MSCS moral statutes like chastity, temperance and Christianity. He also reinforced the MSCS paternalistic values towards the settlers referring to them sometimes as children and consistently denying settler attempts to gain more autonomy.

John Brown Russwurm died in 1851 after a long a successful governorship in Maryland in Liberia. It is an historical irony Russwurm was named after the white abolitionist John Brown. In some ways Russwurm saw himself as leading his people in the promised land in Liberia. But, his was not a radical vision. As a facet of his political beliefs, he was an elitist who accepted and condoned white political control and pater-

nalism in Liberia. It would be easy to dismiss Russwurm as a caricature. However, there in lies the strength of Beyan's book. He does not judge Russwurm. Instead, he lets the documents speak. Through his writings as editor of *The Liberia Herald* and *The Freedom's Journal* plus his correspondence, via the ACS and MSCS archives, Russwurm emerges as a virtuous Pan-Africanist abroad. Beyan's work is not just about Russwurm but an exploration of the problems of African-American or Westernized blacks in West Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As such, it fits in with previous scholarship on this topic like Tunde Adeleke's *UnAfrican Americans* and more recently *African-American Exploration in West Africa*.

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# Minutes of the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting of the Liberian Studies Association

April 8, 2006

Charleston, SC

After a fabulous Liberian dinner at the home of meeting host Dr. Alpha Bah, the meeting was called to order by the out-going President, Dr. Phyllis Belt-Beyan. Secretary/Treasurer M. Moran read the minutes of last year's business meeting in Kalamazoo, MI and presented the 2006 financial report. The Association currently has a healthy bank balance of \$7,707.81.

President Belt-Beyan noted that some of the cost of putting out the journal is expected to be covered by the editor's institution; currently Western Michigan University is subsidizing the journal at between \$500 and \$700 per issue. A new journal editor must be found to take over from current editor Dr. Amos Beyan. Anyone contemplating taking on the editorship must be prepared to negotiate with their institution for this support.

The discussion turned to consider; is our current practice the best, most cost effective way to produce the journal? It was noted that we have to maintain professional standards; this is not just secretarial work. Dr. Ruth Stone noted that if we could get the back issues of the LSJ on JSTORE, we could derive income as well as make the journal more available, especially to readers outside of the US. JSTORE is fully searchable and committed to a perpetual archive, which could solve the problem of our having to pay Sheridan to store the negatives each year (costs to store negatives in 2005-06 were \$880). They do the scanning of back issues themselves at no cost to the journal and they are looking for more "obscure" titles. The motion was made and seconded to authorize Ruth Stone to enter discussions with JSTORE and to move the negatives of back issues now stored at Sheridan to the Liberia Collections Project at Indiana University. In the ensuing discussion, an amendment was offered by Phyllis Belt-Beyan to **never** convert the LSJ to a purely on-line journal. The amendment was moved and seconded. It was further noted that JSTORE is working with many African universities. They won't let people download the whole set, but if we give permission, they will put it all on a hard drive and distribute it to Liberian institutions. The vote on the amended motion was called and unanimously approved. Ruth and Verlon Stone, Phyllis Belt-Beyan and Amos Beyan, and Mary Moran agreed to work on this together.

Dr. Amos Beyan was called upon to give his report as editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal*. He has now published three issues (there was applause at this announcement).

We are still missing four issues (Vol. 27/2, Vol. 28/1&2, and Vol. 29/1) from the previous editorial period. Last year, the officers reached a decision to publish two combined volumes (27/2 and 28/1 in a single binding and 28/2 and 29/1 in another). Dr Elwood Dunn has taken on the responsibility for these issues. We are expecting the first of these to appear in June of 2006. The state of our budget is favorable for producing these issues, since once the journal began appearing again, people began to send in their membership fees. There was a discussion about the problems of back-dating. The missing issues are from 2002-03 and so we have to select articles that do not refer to more recent events, have more recent citations, etc. We should ask established Liberianists to submit work that is not easily dated. Amos Beyan will be editing two more issues of the journal on his term, expected in June and November. For the June 2007 issue, the editorship passes to a new person. It is important for everyone who might be considering taking this on to begin discussion with their institution about the costs and support that will be required.

Emmanuel Dolo asked why, if the LSA is a non-profit organization, we are always talking about money? We should be writing grants to get support to produce a high quality journal and streamline the process of production. Phyllis Belt-Beyan mentioned that this is a scholarly journal that needs to be overseen by working scholars; much of the work could not be handed off to purely technical people even if we could pay for it. Svend Holsoe said it was worth exploring what sources of outside funding might be available, but grant-writing must be sustained; once you begin, someone must be continually writing grants if you come to depend on that money. Ruth Stone noted that many organizations, as they grow, try to build endowments which can be invested and provide a source of secure income. There might be people we can approach who would be interested in this. Phyllis agreed, saying we need to grow the next generation of scholars of Liberia. Emmanuel Dolo and Joe Holloway agreed to explore the possibility of writing grants. We need to develop a culture of fund raising and cultivate strategies for grant writing.

Verlon Stone noted that first we need to solve our problem of communication. He can use Indiana University work study students to get a centralized email list together. While the Secretary/Treasurer has a mailing list for the journal, this does not include all who would like to be informed about meetings and the other business of the association. There has never been a centralized email list in the associations' history. The IU students could harvest email lists including the FOL News list and combine them with others. Joe Holloway has a big list of customers of New World Africa Press. We could try to use this to increase our membership. We should also think about getting students to think of Liberia as a site for new research, get younger as well as established scholars to "go back." The membership of the LSA changes from year to year; people move and we sometime lose track of them unless they keep in touch with us or someone knows where they are. Elwood suggested that a small committee consisting of Joe Holloway, Emmanuel Dolo, Verlon Stone (others? Svend? Phyllis?) get together and

talk about these issues of communication and financial sustainability. They could report back at the next meeting. This suggestion was stated as a motion, seconded, and passed. The members of the committee will begin with getting the general email list started as soon as possible.

The next issue for discussion was the hosting of the 2007 annual meeting. Cyril Broderick moved that the 2007 meeting be held in Bloomington IN, based on rumors he was hearing. Ruth and Verlon Stone generously offered to host the meeting at Indiana University. Attempts were made to find a date that did not conflict with Easter or Palm Sunday. The week of March 22 was suggested. It was decided that the Stones will check the dates and get back to us. A motion to this effect was carried. The circulating email list of those present was collected by who? (Verlon?).

Joe Holloway asked that the minutes reflect the fact that his company, New World Africa Press, has made a significant donation of books to the LSA for sale to our members as a fund-raiser. Thanks were offered to Dr. Holloway, and also to Svend Holsoe for his stimulating key note address and to Phyllis and Amos for their leadership and hard work with the journal. Thanks were also extended to Alpha Bah, for organizing the fine 2006 meeting we had all just enjoyed and for hosting us all in his home. There was a hilarious story about a banana left behind for some time in a coat pocket in Kalamazoo.

In the final ceremony, out-going President Belt-Beyan noted that she had not wanted to be president, and that considerations of health made it impossible for her to accomplish all she had wanted to do in the last year. She led all the former presidents of the LSA in "laying hands" on the incoming President, Alpha Bah, as he was duly invested and baptized with the authority of his office!

Respectfully submitted,

Mary H. Moran  
Secretary/Treasurer

May 15, 2006

# Financial Report, Liberian Studies Association April 2005 to April 2006

*Submitted by Mary H. Moran*

Bank Balance as of February 2005	\$5969.76
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## Income:

Individual Memberships, Library Subscriptions, 2007-2007-2007	\$6240.00
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Proceeds from 2005 Annual Meeting, Registration fees and sales of books	787.00
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<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>\$7027.00</b>
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## Expenses:

Liberian Collections Project for Storage of back issues, maintenance of Website	\$1000.00
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Sheridan Books for storage of Negatives of back issues	880.00
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Sheridan Books for LSJ Vol. 30/1	1849.67
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Sheridan Books for LSJ Vol. 30/2	2556.92
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Postage and Office Expenses	50. 64
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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$6337.23</b>
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March 2006 Balance	\$6,767.81
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Plus deposit, 4/5	\$940.00
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<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$7, 707.81</b>
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## Liberia: A chronology of 25 years of conflict and turmoil

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

Date: 17 Jan 2006

*[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]*

Monrovia, 17 January (IRIN) - On President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's first day in office, IRIN takes a look back at 25 turbulent years of war and, finally, peace in Liberia.

April 12, 1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, with only a few years of schooling to his name, stages a bloody coup d'état, murdering civilian president William R. Tolbert on grounds of rampant corruption and mismanagement.

April 22, 1980 - Army officers publicly strip and execute 13 government officials by firing squad at beachside military barracks in the capital, Monrovia. Most of the educated elite, including then Minister of Finance Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, flee the country.

October 15, 1985 - Samuel Doe holds and wins Liberia's first multi-party general elections. Opposition leaders cry fraud.

November 12, 1985 - Samuel Doe's former comrade in arms General Thomas Quiwonkpa stages an abortive invasion has briefly topples Doe's regime. Later that day, Doe announces the coup failed and loyal military take to the streets to celebrate. Within days, Quiwonkpa is arrested and murdered by Doe's army loyalists in Monrovia.

January 6, 1986 - Samuel Doe is inaugurated as the president of the second republic and a new constitution - that remains in force today - comes into effect.

December 24, 1989 - Civil war begins with Charles Taylor mounting an insurgency from neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire into the northeastern Liberian border town of Butuo in Nimba County, helped by a group of guerrilla fighters trained in Libya.

May 30, 1990 - ECOWAS heads of State gather in Banjul, Gambia, to discuss the Liberian civil war. A five-member Standing Mediation Committee is set up to thrash out a peace settlement to end the Liberian civil war.

June 1990 - Charles Taylor rebels and Doe's army battle in Monrovia leading to indiscriminate killings of civilians and mass displacement.

July 1990 - Some 600 men, women and children who fled gun battles to take refuge in the Lutheran Church in Monrovia are massacred by government soldiers.

July 6, 1990 - ECOWAS leaders meet again in Banjul and agree to send a multinational peacekeeping force into Monrovia.

July 1990 - A splinter group from Charles Taylor's rebel movement emerges under the Command of General Prince Johnson and enters Monrovia.

August 7, 1990 - ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee establishes a Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), with the express aim of resolving internal conflict in West Africa and in particular in Liberia.

August 8, 1990 - Taylor's rebel fighters enter the Nigerian embassy in Monrovia, killing scores of Nigerians who had sought refuge there while urging their leaders to send peacekeepers in to Liberia.

August 24, 1990 - The first batch of 4,000 West African ECOMOG peacekeepers led by Ghana and Nigeria and comprising soldiers from Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Gambia land in Monrovia. Taylor's rebels, who oppose their intervention, greet them with gunfire and attacks.

September 9, 1990 - President Samuel Doe is captured and tortured to death by Prince Johnson and his rebel fighters. The event is filmed and distributed in the capital.

November 27, 1990 - First attempts at peace talks brokered by ECOWAS are held in Bamako, Mali with Professor Amos Sawyer sworn in as Liberia's first interim head of state.

November 28 1990 - Taylor's rebels and Doe's soldiers sign Liberia's first ceasefire agreement in Bamako, Mali.

December 21, 1990 - Another peace agreement is signed in Banjul between the Interim Government, Taylor's rebels and the remains of Doe's loyalists.

January 1991 - Rebel leader Charles Taylor throws out previously signed peace deals and forms a government based in the central Liberian town of Gbarnga. At this stage his forces control 90 percent of the country.

February 13, 1991 - The Lome Peace Agreement is signed to clear the way for the deployment of ECOMOG peacekeepers throughout Liberia. The deal is never implemented.

April 1991 - The United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) formed by former Doe loyalists in Guinea and Sierra Leone invade Liberia to resist Charles Taylor. Alhaji Kromah, a former Information Minister under Doe, emerges as ULIMO's leader.

June 30, 1991 - Rebel leader Charles Taylor and Interim President Amos Sawyer meet in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, for a reconciliation meeting.

October 14, 1992 - Charles Taylor's rebels launch an all-out attack on peacekeepers and the interim government in the Liberian capital, Monrovia.

July 17, 1993 - ULIMO, the Interim Government and Taylor's rebels meet and sign a ceasefire agreement in Geneva.

July 25, 1993 - Another peace deal is signed in Cotonou, Benin, brokered by ECOWAS, the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) and the UN.



Plans for disarmament and a new transitional government to organise general elections in February 1994 - which never take place - are agreed.

September 12, 1994 - Another peace accord is signed by all the warring parties in Akosombo, Ghana, again brokered by ECOWAS. Warring parties agree to establish a five-member state council to oversee general elections in October 1995. The elections never take place.

December 21, 1994 - Warring parties, which by now have splintered and number five separate groups, travel to Accra, Ghana for more peace talks and agree to elections in November 1995 that never take place.

September 1995 - Warlords Charles Taylor, Alhaji Kromah and George Boley are sworn along with three civilian representatives as members of a collective presidency that will lead a transitional government.

April 6, 1996 - Gun battles erupt in Monrovia between allied forces of Charles Taylor and Alhaji Kromah against forces of dead warlord Roosevelt Johnson who had led a splinter group from Kromah's ULIMO. Some 1000 civilians were killed in the violence and private homes and UN facilities were looted.

August 17, 1996 - Another peace deal is signed by the now seven warring parties and civil society representatives in Abuja, Nigeria again brokered by ECOWAS. Ruth Sando Perry is chosen to chair a new transitional government to organise elections on May 30, 1997.

November 22, 1996 - ECOMOG begins disarmament of warring groups with assistance from the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia.

July 19, 1997 - Charles Taylor wins ECOWAS-supervised elections in which two other warlords Alhaji Kromah and George Boley contested. Taylor's campaign song included the words: "He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, I'll vote for him!"

August 4, 1997 - Charles Taylor is sworn in as President before six West African heads of state in Monrovia for a six-year term.

September 18, 1998 - Taylor's government security forces clash with former rebels.

April 1999 - Dissidents believed to be from Guinea, called the Joint Forces of Liberation for Liberia (JFFL), launched their first attack in Liberia raiding villages and holding six international aid workers hostage.

July 1999 - A rebel group of exiled Liberians form a rebel faction in Freetown, Sierra Leone named Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to oppose Taylor's regime.

September 2000 - LURD rebels launch their insurgency from Guinean raiding villages in northern Liberia's Lofa County.

May 2001 - UN Security Council reinforces an arms embargo on Liberia over Charles Taylor's gun-running in return for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

February 8, 2002 - Charles Taylor declares a state of emergency after LURD rebels make gains in northwestern Liberia.

June 4, 2003 - Liberia peace talks opened in Accra, Ghana and the UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone unseal Charles Taylor's indictment for 17 counts of war crimes committed in supporting rebels in Sierra Leone.

June 6, 2003 - First offensive by LURD rebels on the southern seafront capital, Monrovia.

June 24, 2003 - LURD rebels renew a second offensive on Monrovia, but are repelled by Taylor's troops.

June 17, 2003 - Mediators from LURD and a second rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) along with Taylor government representatives sign a first cease fire following peace talks in Accra, Ghana.

July 19, 2003 - The Cease-fire is broken and LURD stage their final and third attack on Monrovia leaving almost 600,000 displaced. As shelling of the city intensifies, more than 1000 civilians are killed.

June 27, 2003 - Another cease fire signed in Accra, Ghana.

July 4, 2003 - ECOWAS military chiefs agree to send a 3000-strong regional peacekeepers to Liberia to restore peace.

July 6, 2003 - Charles Taylor buckles under international pressure and agrees to leave Liberia and take up asylum in Nigeria after being offered asylum by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

August 4, 2003 - The first batch of 200 West African peacekeepers from Nigeria land as part of a regional force sent to stabilise Liberia.

August 11, 2003 - Charles Taylor steps down handing over power to his vice president. Three African heavy weight leaders travel to Monrovia to watch the ceremony.

August 18, 2003 - Liberia's three warring parties and civilian representatives sign the comprehensive Peace Agreement.

August 21, 2003 - Warring parties select non-partisan Gyude Bryant and Wesley Johnson to head and deputy head a power-sharing transitional government.

September 19, 2003 - The UN Security Council authorises 15,000 strong blue-helmet peacekeepers for Liberia.

October 1, 2003 - UN Peacekeepers begin their mandate in Liberia.

October 14, 2003 - A power-sharing Transitional Government made up of representatives from armed groups and civilian society is inaugurated.

December 1, 2003 - The UN formally launches a country-wide disarmament programme for former combatants.

December 7, 2003 - Fighters riot in Monrovia over poor organisation of disarmament forcing a temporary suspension of the programme.

December 27, 2003 - UN peacekeepers make their first deployment outside of Monrovia.

January 12, 2004 - UN training of a new Liberian police force begins.

February 4, 2004 - A conference on reconstructing Liberia kicks-off in New York and US\$ 520 million is pledged to help rebuild the tattered West African country.

April 15, 2005 - Nation-wide disarmament programme re-starts after a three-month suspension.

October 31, 2004 - The power sharing transitional government announces the official end of disarmament with close to 100,000 men women and child fighters disarmed. Disarmament continues in some remote regions.

November 3, 2004 - Liberia's three warring parties are officially dissolved.

November 8, 2005 - A first batch of internally displaced people begin their journeys home.

February 7, 2005 - The national elections commission releases the timetable legislative and presidential elections on 11 October.

October 11, 2005 - Internationally supervised presidential and legislative elections are held. Retired soccer star millionaire George Weah and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf qualify for a second round run-off poll.

November 8, 2005 - Liberians go to the polls for a second time to choose between the two remaining presidential candidates, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah.

November 23, 2005 - The national electoral commission declares Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf winner of the run-off elections.

January 16, 2006 - President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is inaugurated as Liberia's and Africa's first elected lady president.

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# Liberia

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 1995 (this report covers the period 1.1.94-31.12.94)

### LIBERIA

The killing of civilians increased as fighting intensified between the armed political groups contesting control of Liberia. In addition, these groups tortured and ill-treated civilians and non-combatants and took hostages.

On 7 March, under the terms of the 1993 Cotonou peace accord, the Interim Government of National Unity handed over power to the Liberian National Transitional Government. The Transitional Government was made up of representatives of the three parties to the accord – the Interim Government and the two armed groups which then controlled large areas of Liberia, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (**npfl**) and the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (**ulimo**). However, the peace accord was undermined by the subsequent proliferation of armed factions and increased fighting. The Transitional Government exercised authority only in areas controlled by the forces of the Economic Community of West African States (**ecowas**) Ceasefire Monitoring Group, known as **ecomog**, which held the capital, Monrovia, and the coastal strip to Buchanan, but was unable to enforce a cease-fire and demobilize the warring factions in the rest of Liberia. **ecomog** soldiers allegedly sold arms and ammunition to groups opposed to the **npfl**. The national army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (**afl**), increasingly acted as an armed group independent of the Transitional Government.

In April the **un** Security Council renewed the mandate of the **un** Observer Mission in Liberia (**unomil**), established in September 1993 to help implement the Cotonou peace accord, but in October the number of its military observers was reduced from 370 to 90.

In May a dissident faction within **ulimo**, dominated by the Krahn ethnic group and led by **ulimo** Chief of Staff General Roosevelt Johnson, seized control of **ulimo**'s headquarters in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, from **ulimo** Chairman Alhaji G.V. Kromah and his faction, largely composed of members of the Muslim Mandingo community. Fighting and killings of civilians on ethnic grounds forced some 36,000 civilians to flee the area. In November the two factions agreed a cease-fire. In August three **npfl** ministers in the Transitional Government, who had previously been ministers in the **npfl**'s administration in Gbarnga, Bong County, broke with **npfl** leader Charles Taylor and set up a rival **npfl** faction. They subsequently joined in a

coalition with other armed political groups: the **afl**; the Liberian Peace Council (**lpc**), a Krahn offshoot of the **afl**; the Krahn faction of **ulimo**; and the Lofa Defense Force (**ldf**), a militia fighting the Mandingo faction of **ulimo** in the northeast since late 1993.

In early September the Mandingo faction of **ulimo** and coalition forces attacked the **npfl**'s base in Gbarnga. Large numbers of civilians were reportedly killed by fighters from all the forces involved. During continued fighting throughout September, **ulimo**, coalition and **npfl** forces all claimed control of Gbarnga or parts of it; in late December **npfl** forces retook it. In September **npfl** forces were driven out of Maryland County in the southeast by the **lpc**; there was heavy fighting in September and October and human rights abuses by both sides were reported. Tens of thousands of people fled, both to Monrovia and to neighbouring Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, the largest exodus since 1992. International aid operations were halted in most areas outside the **ecomog**-controlled zone.

On 12 September an agreement brokered by **ecowas**, the Organization of African Unity and the **un** was reached in Akosombo, Ghana, between Lieutenant-General Hezekiah Bowen, Chief of Staff of the **afl**, Charles Taylor and Alhaji Kromah. It aimed to give their factions more control of a new Transitional Government and to facilitate disarmament. The agreement was opposed by civilian groups meeting in a National Conference in Monrovia. Further talks, which included civilians and other armed groups, led to a cease-fire in December.

On 15 September a coup attempt by members of the **afl** led by former Lieutenant-General Charles Julue was thwarted by **ecomog** forces. Five civilians subsequently arrested were released by the courts but were rearrested in late September and charged with the capital offence of treason. In November General Julue and 37 other officers were charged with treason before a court-martial. None had been tried by the end of the year.

The civil war continued to be fought by armed young men and boys who lived by looting and extortion. Fighters from all the warring factions tortured and deliberately killed unarmed civilians suspected of opposing them, often because of their ethnic origin, as they seized control of territory or raided another group's territory. Ritual killings and cannibalism were also reported. It was usually not possible to confirm reports of killings, the identity of perpetrators or whether abuses were criminally or politically motivated.

Both **afl** and **lpc** fighters – who sometimes operated together – were reported to have been responsible for human rights abuses. On 15 December more than 50 civilians, including 28 children under 10 years old, were massacred at Paynesville near Monrovia. Responsibility was unclear, but witnesses said the attackers were Krahn **afl** soldiers. Nine **afl** officers were reportedly arrested and the Transitional Government ordered an inquiry which had not reported by the end of the year. **lpc** fighters were responsible for killing civilians in central and eastern Liberia, often

because they were suspected of supporting the **npfl**. On 11 September **lpc** fighters reportedly assembled the inhabitants of Kpolokpai, Kokoya District, Bong County, killed 30 alleged **npfl** fighters and supporters with machetes, then shot dead 15 other civilian prisoners and fired into the crowd. Also in September **lpc** fighters in Greenville, Sinoe County, were reported to have killed Marie Tokpa, a girl from the Kpelle ethnic group, who resisted being raped. In early October **lpc** fighters apparently fired on assembled civilians in Zanzaye, Nimba County, killing scores of them. In November **lpc** fighters allegedly killed 12 residents of Sabo Wofiken, Glibo District, Grand Gedeh County, including Joshua Duweh, William Kuwor and David Hinneh. The **lpc** reportedly tortured many civilians by burning them with heated machetes. In Barnabo Beach in July **lpc** fighters allegedly tied their victims' arms behind their backs, burned them severely with heated machetes, forced them to carry looted goods to another village and shot dead one man who had collapsed on the way. In September they allegedly cut off the fingers and ears of Albert Mende, a journalist taken prisoner in Kokoya District, Bong County. In November they reportedly took 10 girls captive in Sabo Wofiken, slashing their feet and forcing them to walk back to the fighters' base in Sinoe County.

The **afil** and **lpc** also took hostage and detained civilians and non-combatants. In May the **lpc** reportedly detained 10 Ugandan **ecomog** soldiers, releasing them a few days later. In June **afil** soldiers detained **unomil** staff at Schieffelin barracks near Monrovia for three days. In July **lpc** fighters beat and detained for five days a civilian in Buchanan who resisted having his bicycle stolen.

Prisoners held under the authority of **ecomog** were released. In April 800 prisoners, held without charge or trial in Monrovia Central Prison in harsh conditions since the **npfl** attack on Monrovia in October 1992, were released. They included people caught in possession of weapons as well as others suspected of supporting the **npfl**. In May Peter Bonner Jallah, a civilian detained by **ecomog** since November 1992, was released without charge. In September the Supreme Court ruled that **ecomog** had no legal authority to arrest or detain.

All the armed opposition groups were responsible for deliberately and arbitrarily killing civilians and non-combatants. On 23 September armed men reportedly killed displaced civilians and medical staff at Phebe Hospital near Gbarnga; responsibility was not clear but the killings apparently occurred after **npfl** forces overran the area. In August the **npfl** was reported to have executed as many as 80 of its own fighters, without any trial, and to have tortured and killed Lieutenant-General Nixon Gaye, an **npfl** Commander, for leading a mutiny against Charles Taylor. In September **npfl** fighters robbed and killed civilians as they fled the Gbarnga area. In one incident they tied up at least 20 men, women and children and threw them into the St John River at Bahla bridge. In another, they reportedly shot dead some 100 people in Palala, Bong County, on suspicion of being **ulimo** supporters. From October **npfl** fighters reportedly killed scores of civilians in Maryland County whom they suspected of supporting

the **lpc**, among them Simon Gyekye, a Ghanaian school principal in Plebo. Although human rights abuses by **npfl** fighters went mostly unpunished, an **npfl** commander and some fighters were reportedly detained by the **npfl** in October in connection with the killing of civilians at the St John River. In December the **npfl** executed six senior commanders held responsible for the fall of Gbarnga in September, apparently after a court-martial.

Fighters with the **ldf** were also reported to have killed civilians. In July **ldf** fighters reportedly killed more than 70 civilians in the village of Rusie, near Zorzor, Lofa County.

The two **ulimo** factions also killed civilians. Mandingo **ulimo** fighters reportedly killed at least four civilians and took women hostage for money when they burned and looted villages in the Tienne area, Cape Mount County, in mid-June, apparently accusing the villagers of supporting the Krahn **ulimo** faction. In August Mandingo **ulimo** fighters allegedly killed at least 20 civilians in Gbesseh, Cape Mount County. In August and September they also reportedly killed civilians in Lofa and Bong Counties. Some victims were apparently killed and eaten for ritual purposes, for example, Paul Tarwoi, a traditional healer who was reportedly captured in Zowolo, Lofa County, and killed in Gorlu. In Gbarnga, a **ulimo** tribunal reportedly ordered the "execution" by firing-squad of civilians whom it found to be **npfl** supporters. At least two Tanzanian **ecomog** soldiers were killed in Kakata in September, 50 kilometres northeast of Monrovia, when Krahn **ulimo** fighters reportedly attacked a convoy of civilians fleeing Gbarnga which included **unomil** observers and aid workers.

All the armed opposition groups tortured and ill-treated captives and civilians. They routinely subjected prisoners to "tabey", a form of torture where the victim's elbows are tied together behind the back, sometimes leading to long-term paralysis and nerve damage.

In late June Krahn **ulimo** fighters took hostage six unarmed **unomil** officers in Tubmanburg for two days, reportedly beating them and subjecting them to mock executions. In September large numbers of civilians and refugees were beaten and raped and their property looted by the armed groups involved in the fighting around Gbarnga. All the armed groups were reported to have forcibly recruited boys and young men to fight for them, and to have used civilians as slave labour to carry supplies, harvest crops, mine diamonds and carry looted goods to the border for sale. Some of the armed opposition groups took hostage **ecomog** troops, **unomil** observers and foreign aid workers. In July the **npfl** was reported to be holding about 25 **ecomog** soldiers and 30 long-term political prisoners. In August it reportedly detained and ill-treated two chiefs in Bong County, Ruth Kollie and Willie Bestman, who tried to persuade the **npfl** to attend the National Conference in Monrovia, and in September 30 civilians from the Bassa ethnic group in Butuo, Nimba County, accused of supporting the **lpc**. In September **npfl** fighters reportedly detained 43 **unomil** officers

and six aid workers in various parts of the country for up to 10 days. In separate incidents in May Mandingo **ulimo** fighters held hostage 17 **un** employees delivering food aid and 16 Nigerian **ecomog** soldiers, accusing them of supporting the rival Krahn **ulimo** faction. They were released after a few days.

An Amnesty International delegation visited Liberia in July to investigate human rights abuses and to raise its concerns with officials of the Transitional Government, **afi**, **ecomog** and **unomil**. No response was received to requests to meet the **npfl** in Gbarnga, and renewed fighting prevented the delegation from travelling outside areas under **ecomog** control.



## Delaying Justice in the name of Peace in Liberia Why do I agree with Banks, Crane, and others?

*Ben Tee Browne*

*"...I think we ought to stop kidding ourselves, the "by-gone" we are referring to may not totally be achieved if we continue to reward these war zealots with positions in government in the name of peace to serve the same people they committed all the barbaric acts against in the name of liberation. I think they all must face justice like their king, Charles Taylor..."*

When Charles Gankay Taylor, the most notorious rebel leader in Africa, departed from Liberia three years ago, many well-meaning Liberians and some people in the international community continuously pushed for Taylor to be brought to justice for his roles in the notorious and barbaric war in Sierra Leone. Now he is sitting in a jail cell in Sierra Leone where he belongs. While I think bringing rebel king, Charles Taylor to justice is very important to peace in the West African sub-region, if other rebel leaders in the Liberian war are not equally brought to justice, their presence will continue to hang over Liberian like a big dark cloud during the rainy season, the peace we so desired and have sacrificed for over the years may continue to be viewed as fragile. Prince Yormie Johnson (now senator from Nimba County), Alhaji G. V. Kromah, Thomas Yaya Nimely, Demante Konneh, Aldophus Dolo, Benjamin Yenten, and many others must be equally brought to justice to finally close the last chapter in the 14 years senseless war in Liberia. They all are as dangerous and notorious as Charles Taylor.

In mid-1990, like many Liberians who feared for their safety in the areas controlled by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) during the war, I was forced to leave from the only home I have known all my life in sinkor to go to Bushrod Island with the hope of going to my brother in Gardnerville. Little did I know that Gardnerville was considered a different country that was controlled by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Bushrod Island was another country too that was controlled by Prince Y. Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), a brake-away rebel group from Taylor; I was forced to stayed on Bushrod Island without food, money, family, and friend or loved-one like many other Liberians.

After spending my first night on the water filled-living-room floor of Ms. Joanna Koffa in Logan town, I was told that Prince Johnson distributes rice to new comers at his Duala, cotton tree sub-office on a daily basis. Some of the displaced people who had spent the night at Ms Koffa's house and I decided to check the food distribution out. After we waited for about 45 minutes at the distribution site, a convoy of looted

jeeps carrying boys and girls dressed in jeans and T-shirts on top speed came rolling down at the crowd, nearly knocking some of the by-standers in their path. Before the jeeps could completely stop, a well-built man dressed in a complete American styled military uniform jumped out of the second jeep in the convoy. In his left hand was a guitar, he walked to the crowd and started to sing a popular gospel song, "What a friend we have in Jesus?"

The more than three hundred hungry displaced people had no choice but to join him into singing. Before long, a malnourished boy, about eight years old found his way right next to Johnson. With his swollen feet, stomach and wide eyes that seem to be begging for food, he stood at the feet of Johnson like a squirrel at the feet of an elephant. In no time Johnson recognized his presence and screamed at him to leave but like any child his age, he was gone out of the crowd for a few minutes and was back.

Johnson, with his left hand holding his guitar pulled out his silver pistol and shot the boy in the head. Before the boy's malnourished body could fall to the ground, some of Johnson's trigger-happy fools (bodyguards) emptied the magazines of their automatic guns on his innocent body. Many of us ran a little distance from the spot. Some of the women in the crowd were seen covering their faces and screaming. Some who remember their faith made a quick sign of the cross.

"Bury him and come for rice!" Johnson screamed at the group of men standing nearby. About 20 men dragged the boy's scattered body and pushed it under a disable truck nearby. They tried to cover the body with anything, including papers and grass. They later received a 100 pounds bag of "gold dust" rice. The rest of us stayed around more than two hours after Johnson left for his Caldwell headquarter without distributing rice or providing any explanation for taking that innocent armless life away. Later during my stay on Bushrod Island, I was unfortunate to witness four additional killing of civilian whose only crime was being present at a particular place in pursuit of food; all by prince Johnson. I believed that there are many horrible stories out there from areas formally controlled by all the rebel leaders named above; so why should we push for only Taylor to face justice when someone like Prince Y. Johnson and Aldophus Dolo are serving as senators and some of the other names mentioned above are walking freely on the streets of Monrovia and other parts of the world?

Many well-meaning people continue to rightly argue that Taylor is facing justice for crimes he allegedly masterminded against the innocent people of Sierra Leone. What's about his crime against the Liberian people, what's about senator (what a joke) Johnson and Dolo crime against the innocent women, men, and children in Liberia? What's about Kromah, Nimely, Yenten, Konneh, and many others who masterminded crimes against the peace loving people of the land of liberty, rubbing them of their future?

How prepare are we in Liberia in bringing senators Johnson and Dolo to justice? How prepare and willing is Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's government in facilitating the process to bring Alhaji Kromah, Demante Konneh, Thomas Nimely, Benjamin Yenten,

and many other to justice now that the elections are over? In Liberia (Africa), where government officials are considered to be above the law, Liberians must take a radical stand as we did by being the first to elect female president in Africa. We must bring those two senators and all other rebel leaders in the Liberian war to justice now. This is why I agreed with former Liberian Justice Minister, Philip Banks, former Chief Prosecutor, David Crane, and many others that there must be a court set up in Liberia to prosecute Charles Taylor, Prince Johnson, Aldophus Dolo, and other war lords.

Over the time many people have argued that in order for Liberia to move forward as a nation, we must let "by-gone, be by-gone." I think we ought to stop kidding ourselves, the "by-gone" we are referring to may not totally be achieved if we continue to reward these war zealots with positions in government in the name of peace to serve the same people they committed all the barbaric acts against in the name of liberation. I think they all must face justice like their king, Charles Taylor.

Now is the time for all well-meaning Liberians to vociferate to the government of Liberia and the international community to help us bring all these war lords and their cronies to justice to answer to question for their crimes against the innocent and peace loving people of Liberia. This will help set an example for the generation after us.

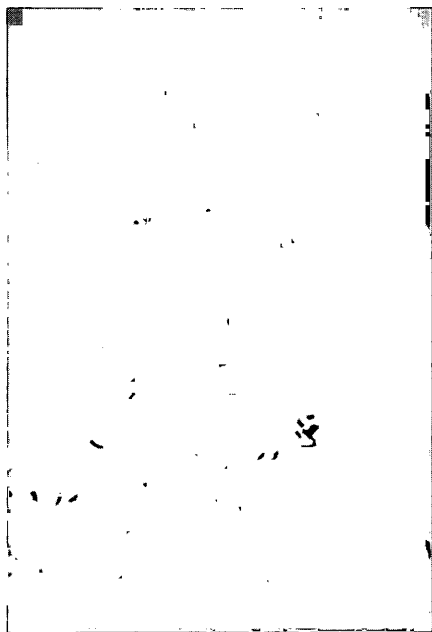
The young boy who died at the hands of Prince Johnson, like the ten of thousands of other young people who died at the hands of men playing God during the war for no justifiable reasons could have grown up to become Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers, Engineers, Bankers, Preachers or President of Liberia. We must not allow their killers and the killers of the more than three hundred thousand Liberians to go unpunished. If Liberia is to move forward to relative peace, we must NOT continue to delay justice in the name of peace.

Let us remember that the ultimate question for any well-meaning Liberian to ask at this time in our history is not how we can extricate ourselves heroically from the affair, but how the generation after us shall continue to live in peace. Let us also remember that as Liberians, our lives will not be determined by what happened to us, but by how we react to what happen.

# Let's Set the Record Straight!

## A Rejoinder to Armed Resistance as Last Resort: Mandingo Factor in the Liberian Civil War

*James Kokulo Fasuekoi*



*The self-style five star General Alhaji Kromah, leader of the ULIMO-K rebel movement, is seen here defending his ULIMO movement at a mass gathering in Monrovia, the war-torn Liberian capital. Photo by James Fasuekoi.*

For more than three years since I left our country Liberia, I have for good reasons refrained from picking on controversial political issues, especially when they involved those at the helm of power so as not to endanger the lives of family members and friends.

But at times, some statements become so provocative and misleading to the point that one is forced to respond in an attempt to set the records straight for the benefit of generations to come. It is for such reason that I respond to Mr. Varfley Dolleh's recent two-part series published on September 20 and on November 4, 2002 by Liberiaorbit.org, entitled: "Armed Resistance as Last Resort: Mandingo Factor in the Liberian Civil War."

In his series Dolleh, a Mandingo, often evaded the truth and at the same time tried to justify the indiscriminate mass killings of innocent civilians largely from the rival Lorma tribe carried out by Alhaji Kromah's ULIMO Mandingo rebels in various parts of the country during the war, which Dolleh was a part.

One reading Dolleh's articles is left with the belief that his ethnic Mandingo tribe was indeed the only targeted group which endured endless persecution at the hands of Charles Taylor's NPFL rebels who invaded the country in late 1989.

He creates an impression that Mandingoes were the only group of Liberians who suffered both material and human tragedy which engulfed the entire nation for nearly

eight years while the rest of the tribes watched on with total delight. This is completely false!

What I realized after reading his face-saving message was that throughout the series, Dolleh, a former Kromah ULIMO-K liaison officer, in most cases deviated from the truth but instead chose to play on exaggeration in an attempt to gain public sympathy at the same time cover the hard facts. He deliberately misled readers as regards actual roles he, Alhaji Kromah and others played during the civil war.

At this time, I shall attempt to share light on some of the happenings that still remained fresh in my memory involving Dolleh and his boss, Kromah, both of whom have lately been showing off and bragging about their so-called tribal struggle which led to the systematic destruction of lives and properties of a large tribe in the country, the Lormas.

As a journalist and also a citizen of Lofa County, I see it as a duty not only for posterity but also for many Liberians who lived abroad during the entire crisis. I must do this because for in the words of Dolleh, "Players and eyewitnesses have the obligation to posterity to narrate the real story". Every witness to the war should therefore come out and tell what they know so that posterity will know what they did here!

### **The "Massacre" in Barkedu, Lofa County**

Varfley Dolleh claimed that more than 600 civilians, mainly Mandingo women and children were massacred in his hometown of Barkedu in Lofa County. Dolleh, though failed to mention the month or year, and cited "Thursday" as the day the alleged incident occurred without a quote or attribution. No one knows how he arrived at the "over 600 civilian" casualty. This is completely an exaggeration.

While I don't intent in anyway to justify the murder of a single person let alone a group of people, it is equally in place to admit such figure is far beyond reality. His claims no doubt are nothing but fairy tales in the absence of a tangible proof.

He further added, "Many young women were taken hostage and abused. Their breasts were later slashed off and set (they) free while others were thrown in crocodile infested rivers." This is again false! As a citizen of Lofa County, I know of no crocodile infested rivers in that region. Could he Dolleh show me one for my own safety? Or can he point to a female Mandingo victim who lost her breast to a Charles Taylor rebel?

### **Liberians Were All Victims**

The Taylor led war as senseless as it was, was not really directed at a particular tribe or group of people. It affected anyone who stood in its path. One's chances for survival largely depended on luck and in most cases where he or she was at a time.

See for example, a next-door neighbor, Yarkpazuo Kpoto, from my hometown of Yeala. He was executed one morning in August 1990 at Fandell University Campus all because he bore a name thought to have a link to the late former Senator Kekura Kpoto. He was not a Mandingo.

NPFL rebels gunned down Collen Pyne, a businessman and a Gardnerville neighbor as we watched helplessly. His only crime was that he was a Krahn. As for Mr. Toka, a former custom collector and also an ethnic Krahn, Kromah's rebels reportedly killed him during an inter-tribal war between Mandingoes and Krahn in western Liberia. Former artist and Liberia's only super yoga star, Jacob Dweh of Kendeja Cultural village, again an ethnic Krahn, was murdered along with other artists.

Hardly did I drink water or eat my meal at the Caresburg V.O.A. displaced center, the day in August 1990 when I saw an NPFL rebel bragging before a crowd about how he had killed a Mandingo man and taken his "Uncle Sam" (US dollars) away. That rebel wore a blood stained T-shirt with double jeans and there was no reason to doubt his statement when he began to display a bunch of U.S. dollars.

As I left the crowd, I began to worry about the fate of a Mandingo man who was shared a temporary shelter with us nearby. He, like thousands others, had been forced to join civilians streaming into the north of the capital amid heavy gunfire.

Renamed by my Lorma friends as Mulbah to ensure his safety, he hardly stepped out of our tent for days, fearing someone might recognize him who knew him before. But with God's blessings we managed to keep him into hiding, showering him with love and kindness until I eventually left the team and headed west.

I am sure one would also agree with me that the more than 600 civilians, mainly women and children massacred by Samuel Doe's death squad were not Mandingoes but rather Gios and Manos. Let's also consider the Carter Camp in Harbel and Duport Road in Monrovia massacres. So for one to conclude that it was only a particular tribe or sector that suffered to a level of unimaginable proportion in Liberia's civil war is ridiculous.

It was indeed a bitter experience for all of us, Liberians.

### **Kromah's ULIMO-K Massacre**

When news of ULIMO-K's atrocities (Kromah's Mandingo rebels) with Islamic undertone first began reaching newspaper offices in Monrovia via few survivors who escaped to the capital through Guinea, many paid little attention dubbing them as usual war rumors. Then came 1993 when The Inquirer Newspaper published series of alarming reports from a school teacher who for months trekked through dense forest in Lofa, then controlled by Kromah's Mandingo rebels, to reach Guinea.

Sam Kortimai in a ten-page report gave vivid accounts of the horror and agonies brought upon Lofains, particularly the opposing Lorma tribe by Kromah's men. Towns and villages had been burned down and farm products confiscated by the rebels, a situation that led many to flee to neighboring Guinea. Sources say this was a reaction to arson attacks carried out on Mandingo properties by Taylor's men who had long fled the region as ULIMO zoomed in.

"Men were forcibly moved into female secret societies while women were also taken to the Poro which belongs to men with both sides being forced at gun point to confess

their secrets" Kortimai wrote. The former Monrovia Central High School teacher, who said his report was based on personal experience as well as information gathered from former students and civilians trapped in those areas, mentioned the massacre of Lorma civilians in towns like Fassama, near Bella Yeala, Nyekebozo and Gizeboiga by Kromah's men.

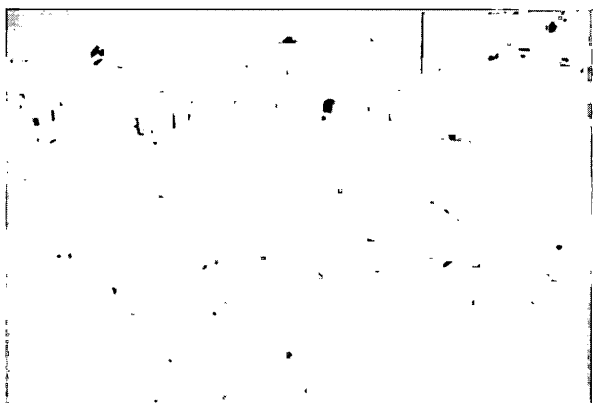
The well equipped and furnished Curran Lutheran Hospital in Zorzor (where I was born) was set ablaze by Mandingo rebels after they had looted and sold all furniture and equipment to Guinean Mandingo traders in Koryama, Guinea. The hospital had remained intact throughout NPFL's occupation in the region for almost four years.

What's so hard to believe is that even other towns like Salayea and Konia where Mandingo properties were untouched suffered, similarly. It should therefore be anyone's guess the fate of my hometown, Yeala, located on the Guinea-Liberian border where there was not a single Mandingo house nor quarter. Yeala was burned to the ground.

Dolleh who now accuses the press of being biased in reporting the plights of Mandingoes in the war, made their ULIMO-K controlled areas inaccessible to local and foreign journalists in order to prevent us from reporting mass killings carried out by them. For example, in late 1994, I was turned down by Dolleh himself at the James Spriggs Pyane Airport where a team of "hand picked" journalists had gathered to travel to the Zorzor region via Guinea to probe into mass killings said to have been carried out by Kromah's men. This move came at the heel of increasing public outrage over killings in Lofa County.

As one who was born, reared and attended school in the region, and also familiar with the region, culture and people, I would have been one of the best choices for the probe if Dolleh and his boss actually meant business. But instead, Dolleh for good reasons deliberately deleted my name from their list in the last minute.

The entire trip however turned out to be a fiasco in that the team failed to reach Zorzor, which was the center of the allegation. It was alleged to be under fire at the



*This photo scene shows the center of war ravaged Zorzor, once a bustling city. It is one of the many scenes captured by Journalist James Fasuekoi in 1998 in the aftermath of the mass excavation of the remains of hundreds of young men mainly from the Lorma tribe reportedly buried alive by Alhaji Kromah's rebels during the Liberian civil war. The exercise covered Yeala, Zorzor, Fessibu and Bokeza with the recovery of the skeletal remains of several victims.*

time. Reporters instead hang around Voinjama, ate some goat soup and “monikalama” and left the same way they went in.

### **Why Lofa Defense Force was formed**

The founding of the Lofa Defense Force, probably the smallest armed faction in Liberia’s civil war is said to have come about accidentally, a former (LDF) commander told me in Zorzor in July 1999. Alhaji Kromah’s Mandingo rebels, with the assistance of Guinean Mandingo speaking soldiers (their cousins) who controlled the borders, are said to have carried out unspeakable cruelty against Lorma people in the Koryama region, a situation that prompted the creation of LDF.

In Koryama, a town predominantly inhabited by Mandingoes just about an hour walk across the border from Yeala, Guinean soldiers in one swoop reportedly arrested as many as 22 young Lorma boys both from the refugee camp in Koryama and those fleeing from Kromah’s men; had them chained in a truck and transported to the Yeala-Guinea border where they were executed by Kromah’s rebels. Some accordingly, were skinned alive while others were buried alive.

Many of the refugees who have since returned to Lofa told me in Zorzor and Yeala during excavations of the victims in 1998 that even photos of the ULIMO ordeals were sometimes put on display by the killers at the Koryama Market ground and surrounded by the refugees. According to the refugees, the town’s officials almost all of whom were Koniaka Mandingoes (the group Dolleh and Kromah belong to) endorsed the killings and gave a blind eye while all of this took place.

Ask any Zorzor district resident who witnessed ULIMO-K’s arrival to Zorzor or who lived at the Koryama Guinea refugee center for Liberians, he would give you names like Duyan, Tipoteh, Lavela, Guatu, Galakpai, Papa, Pewee, Monie and small-man who previously worked at Curran Lutheran Hospital plus his little nephews who were all murdered at the Yeala border just in a day.

Some of the printed photos from their ordeals, such as people being skinned alive were later recovered by rival Lofa Defense Force fighters after they drove Kromah’s men from border towns like Yeala, Zorzor, Fissebu and Bokeza. These pictures would later go far to prove the level of cruelty meted out to the Lorma people.

Similar evidence discovered by Roosevelt Johnson’s Krahn (ULIMO-J) rebels when they removed Kromah’s men from the Klay-Bomi region in western Liberia during ULIMO inter-tribal war, showed shocking images of civilians being tortured to death by ULIMO-K rebels. Some of the photos, published by the EYE Newspaper showed one “Gen. Pepper & Salt” cutting off men’s ears and their private parts. It brought sharp public criticism against the faction.

Traveling to Lofa with a team of journalists to cover Kromah’s ULIMO-K well publicized unilateral disarmament ahead of national disarmament, part of the horrible Lofa tragedy revealed itself to us in a manner that was unbelievable. One of Kromah’s child-soldiers traveling with us (journalists) in an 18 Seater mini van, recalled how he



and fellow fighters murdered "so many Lorma people" in Sukromu, near Zorzor. sandwiched by another correspondent and I, (both Lormas) the boy, about 17 remembered how a Lorma woman pleaded with them to kill her and have her little children set free. "But we killed all of them" the boy boasted. My friend and I deeply gazed at each other as we drove past the middle of Sukromu that night where the killing had occurred.

### **The War, Greed for Power and Wealth**

Of the more than 60,000 rebels and their warlords who fought the civil war, none would ever merit the least award presented to freedom or Liberation fighters around the world, for our "freedom fighters" were nothing but rapists, looters and murderers, battling each other for power and wealth. None can be credited with the protection of the masses' interest.

With this, it's sad then for people like Varfley Dolleh and Alhaji Kromah to be allowed to continue to openly boast and brag about killings they and their ULIMO movement perpetuated against the Liberian people. While other factional members, including warlords remained quiet or shy away from discussing the war, the two Koniakas have lately tried to tell the world that Mandingoes are indeed born "warriors". That their war was a just war. They have also tried to draw their link to an ancient powerful 'Mandingo' warrior, Sundiata Keita who ruled the Mali Empire. One can see that they must have drawn their inspiration from the great Sundiata Keita and Mansa Musa. Whatever the case, they are wrong and will never have a page in history like Keita and Musa. The Liberian war was based on greed, power and wealth. That was why their forces murdered men, women and helpless civilians on the basis of tribal background.

### **Conclusion Statement**

Throughout my entire life, some of the best people I have come across are the Koniaka-Mandingoes. They are a loving, caring and decent group of people. They are intelligent and simple (down to earth) kind of individuals. Unlike Dolleh and Kromah, they are not greedy for power and wealth nor do they rape and murder. They would rather resort to a peaceful settlement in a dispute and not go to war. And I am proud of them and cherish them for these values. Both Dolleh and Kromah must have come from a different breed of Koniaka-Mandingo.

Throughout every household in Lofa County, visitors are first greeted with horrific war stories of how Kromah's rebels murdered innocent people. There is hardly a home that went untouched by this tragedy.

Both the Lormas and Mandingoes, two dominant tribes in the county and long time best friends have now turned foes. They can't no longer bear living together as brothers and sisters as they did in the past, all due to the bitterness of war.

The two tribes were battling each others with machetes in Lofa as I left the country in 1999. This was one of many such occasional fights between the two since the general elections of 1997 that ended nearly eight years of bloody civil war.

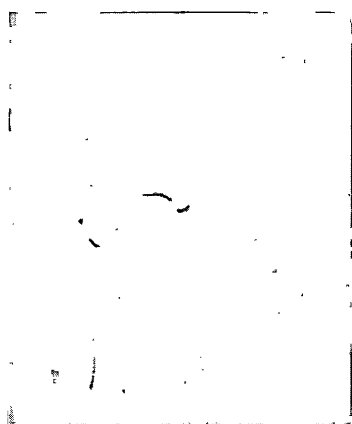
But it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, for it is people like Dolleh and Kromah who have screw up the peace and mutual understanding among these people in their quest to introduced Islamic fundamentalism in our country. They indeed succeeded!

If there will ever be a genuine national reconciliation in Liberia, it must first begin with people like Dolleh and his boss, Alhaji Kromah publicly admitting to their mistakes and guilt and asking for forgiveness from those whom they hurt; this includes the Lormas, Krahns etc. This also goes for the Krahns, Manos and Gios.

Mandingo elders in Liberia are now seeking dialogue through seminars with offended parties in the war, and they must be given a pat on the back. And I share my blessings with them as they strive to reunite our country. This is what Dolleh and Kromah ought to have been doing. This is because they contributed to the animosity among our people. If they can't help in the peace building process, they must now shut up now!

## Kromah And Taylor's Twisted Logic

*Paul Japheth Sunwabe*



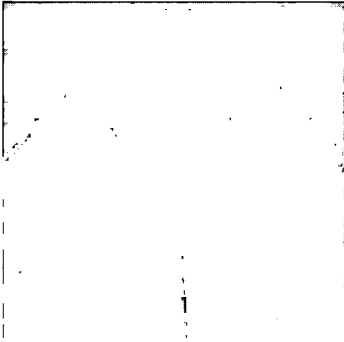
The past thirteen years has been agonizing for the people of Africa's oldest republic, Liberia. Countless lives, particularly those of innocent women and children have been destroyed and Liberia itself has been denigrated and consigned to the laughable status of an international pariah. Wars and rumors of wars are now synonymous with Liberian politics, and the country's traumatized population now lives well below the poverty line. In Africa, Europe and America, sounds of dirges riddle Liberian homes as victims of the humiliating refugee life; parents, aunts and uncles who have died of hypertension, frustration and starvation precipitated by the continued

nonsensical Liberian Civil War are laid to rest. As the grieve stricken families try to cope with their losses, they are reminded by Liberian Warlords, and through the many British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) interviews that they will not be coming home anytime soon. But, who exactly are the men who have tormented the impoverished people of Liberia for the past thirteen years? And, what have the people of Liberia done to, or against the will of these warlords to warrant the kinds of brutality that has been meted against them? Lastly, where is the international community when genocide continues to rein supreme in Liberia?

Of course, the men who have orchestrated, directed and mastermind what some caring members of the international community have come to call the "Liberian Genocide" are all sons of Liberia. I mean men who were born in Liberia, enjoyed the comfort and security of Liberia, and who at some point in time benefited from jobs and paychecks offered by the same Liberia whose people they have murdered, vituperated and humiliated worldwide, particularly in the West African sub-region.

These haughty men who are very verbose, and obsessed with making excuses and blaming other people for their actions operate with the same logic. Belatedly, some of these warlords, especially General Prince Johnson, General Roosevelt Johnson, and George Boley have been relatively quite while Liberia's criminal President Charles Taylor and Mr. Alhaji G.V. Kromah have elected to once again take to the airwaves making inflammatory remarks regarding the "Liberian Genocide", and advancing lies and deceptions in frantic efforts to circumvent their crimes. However, it now makes sense

to share lights on the twisted ideological philosophy of some of these warlords, particularly Mr. Alhaji G. V. Kromah who gave an interview to The Perspective Magazine in October 2000. In that interview, Mr. Alhaji G. V. Kromah resorted to anachronism, denials, cant and canards when quizzed about the roles his brutal ULIMO-K rebel faction played in the Liberian atrocity. As history would have it, and as time would permit, I will scrutinize Kromah's interview and put the Liberian Criminal Warlord to the test in order to ascertain whether or not he was truthful regarding the genocide he and other Liberian Warlords committed against the conscience of Africans.



As one begins to read "Alhaji The Executioner Kromah's" lies, it becomes painfully clear that he operates with the same mindset and logic of his partner in the destruction of lives and prosperity in Liberia, Mr. Charles "Criminal" Taylor. I have dubbed this logic the "The Perverted Logic of Kromah and Taylor". In Kromah's October 2000 The Perspective cant, he meticulously avoided the real issues he was confronted with, and took the reputable The Perspective Magazine for a ride that led to a super highway of excuses, denials and blames shifting. Particu-

larly significant, the notorious Liberian Warlord, and a career con artist seemed to have out smarted his interviewers by not answering a single question. Instead, he was obsessed with listening to himself, and indulging The Perspective with false statements just like Mr. Taylor has done with Western and African journalists over the past ten plus years.

Now, let's listen to Mr. Lying Kromah: "You mean the kind of alliance that was between Hitler and the Jews, or the one between the devil and Jesus in the wilderness, or between Mohamed and Satan... If there were ever any kind of "alliance" between me and Taylor, the BTC barracks and its Krahn contents would have been "carpet bombed and flattened" during the 1996 hostilities between pro-government forces and the Krahn oriented forces (AFL, LPC, and ULIMO-J)". Alhaji, it is one thing to preside over the killings of women and children, and it is yet another thing to try to refute historical facts in such an irresponsible, and hasty faction. Please remember the many eyes witness accounts, the UN reports on Liberia, the US State Department documentary, and of course, Mr. Stephen Ellis' "The Mask of Anarchy". All of the mentioned sources point to an alliance between you and your buddy Mr. Taylor on April 6 1995. Why would everybody lie on you regarding an alliance that even ECOMOG contends existed between you and Mr. Taylor? Is it because they harbor some kind of resentment for you in particular, or your murderous ULIMO-K fiction? The fact of the matter is that you and Taylor planned to liquidate the entire Krahn leadership in the vicinity of Camp Johnson Road, the UN Drive and the Barclay Training Center because their presence posed serious threats to you and your traditionally obsession with Liberian

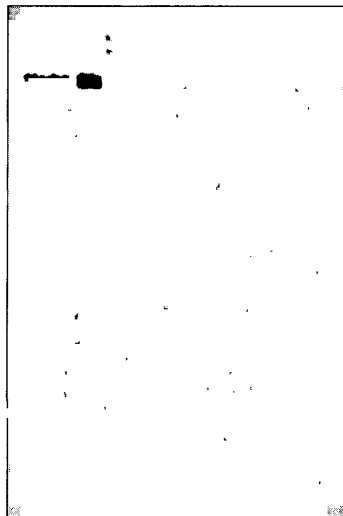
political power. Please bear in mind that I am not trying to placate ULIMO-J, the AFL and the LPC in any ways. But, faced with imminent annihilation, they gallantly fought off the so-called "Kromah-Taylor" killing forces. Note that the AFL, LPC and ULIMO-J were just as criminal and brutal as NPFL and ULIMO-K. In fact, they were so violent that when they killed Kromah's master "Mandingo Executioner" General Doumbuya, they cannibalized him publicly.

The most painful, and yet laughable thing about Kromah's interview is the fact that he described his ULIMO-K thugs as resistance forces. Beyond this, he tried very hard to reject his rightful title, "a Liberian Warlord". Additionally, the University of Liberia educated lawyer turned warlord implied that he and ULIMO-K had only acted in self-defense. Africans, does this sound familiar? Well, this is the "Taylor-Kromah's logic" at it's best.

Back in 1990, Taylor told the world that his NPFL was nothing more than a group of freedom fighters whose interest in Liberian affairs was the liberation of the Liberian people, particularly those of Nimba County who endured ten years of Samuel Doe's ruthlessness. But liberation for Liberia meant the total destruction of the country's limited infrastructures, the looting of prosperity by Taylor and his NPFL elite, and most importantly the execution of Krahn and Mandingo women and children, and prominent Nimbaians such as Jackson F. Doe, Samuel Dokie, Stephen Daniels and Moses with Duopu.

Based on the twisted logic of both Taylor and Kromah, self-defense means capitalizing on the legitimate grievances of some members of the Liberian society, and exploiting those grievances to commit heinous crimes against humanity while personally enriching oneself. According to their perverted logic, when you are questioned about your crimes, than you can say something like this: "given the crimes committed against the Mandingoes, actions had to be taken to halt Mr. Taylor's forces". For Kromah and ULIMO-K, those actions included the killings of innocent Liberians; particularly members of the Kpelles, Lormas, Manos and Gios who found themselves in Kromah's diamond rich Lofa and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

Stephen Ellis captures Kromah's handy works in these sad words, "factions advertised their ferocity by putting skulls at the side of their road-blocks... ULIMO-K was even reported to have a checkpoint where the cord, which blocked the road, was formed by human intestines" (The Mask of Anarchy 1999, p. 46). But the self-proclaimed Liberian opposition leader dismisses Ellis' book as a volume rushed to meet publication deadlines. Kromah's own book is supposed to be coming up, but the only thing is that it will be



lit with more lies and denials. Beyond this, credible Liberians will not be interested in reading an ethnic monologue that is solely based on bias, and that tries to justify crimes committed against humanity.

In his continued infatuation with denials, Kromah told *The Perspective Magazine* that his faction never looted, or benefited from any illegal economic transactions in his controlled territories. Again, the abundance of post-Liberian Civil War evidence does not seem to support Kromah's position at all. Stephen Ellis is even more candid and emphatic in refuting Kromah's claims: "But when ULIMO-K arrived, they took everything across the border...since ULIMO-K was run by Mandingo traders, and raised many of its fighters in Guinea, it was particularly noted for its tendency to loot and export what it had stolen" (*Mask of Anarchy* 1999, p.134). So, ULIMO-K did loot Liberia just like the NPFL, LPC, ULIMO-J, etc. Stephen Ellis again decried Kromah's theft in these succinct words, "The faction had its own immigration and customs services through which it controlled travelers' movements, and levied taxes on trade" (*Mask of Anarchy* 1999, p.134).

In spite of these evidence, and the endless US Department of State reports and Congressional testimonies that accused Liberian Warlords of looting our national resources for their personal bank deposits. Kromah tells us that his faction did not steal anything. On charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, Kromah gave *The Perspective Magazine* a rather interesting response, and that is, any tribunal set up for Liberia should try people like Dr. Amos Sawyer, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and a host of other Liberians. But the question had nothing to do with Dr. Sawyer or Mrs. Sirleaf. Again, this is a classic display of the perverted logic of Kromah and Taylor. I mean these guys will never boldly address any questions relating to their crimes.

In the recent rubbish he sent to *The Perspective Magazine*, the verbose and bombastic Liberian criminal now wants the UN tribunal in Sierra Leone to indict Mr. "Criminal" Taylor. This author is thankful that Kromah is at least attempting to add his voice to those of us who want to see Liberian criminals punish for their crimes. Since Kromah is so interested in a tribunal for Liberia, I would respectfully suggest that he turn himself over to the court in the Hague for the many crimes he committed against the Kpelles and Lormas in Lofa County. And just in case he has forgotten his crimes, let me remind him from Ellis' "*Mask of Anarchy*" again: "When ULIMO-K invaded Upper Lofa County...the Mandingo fighters took cruel revenge, occupying towns where they had previously had no permanent rights of residence" (*Mask of Anarchy* 1999 p.127). To the outrage of the Loma and Kpelle inhabitants, they systematically pillaged the sacred groves of the Poro society, desecrating these holy places and stealing the masks and other religious objects". Alhaji, these are your crimes, and if you are a true African man as you have so passionately professed, why don't you assume responsibility for your actions and stop shifting blames and playing the ethnic cards?

As this author tries to hold his peace while he fixates on Kromah's crimes, he is once again reminded about Alhaji's colorable interview with *The Perspective*. Obsessed with lies and spineless like Charles Taylor, the man with whom he once formed an arcane ethnic cleansing alliance on April 6 1996, Kromah averred in October 2000 that ULIMO-K was never interested in profiting from the Liberian Civil War. As usual, the nefarious Liberian Warlord whom many Liberians from Lofa and Bong County considered to be the Liberian equivalent of Germany's Hitler lied again. Ellis is even more emphatic in exposing the Liberian Warlord and his twisted logic: "In a border area of Lofa County some ULIMO-K fighters who had stolen a car, dismantled it and recruit force laborers to carry the parts on their heads over bush paths to nearby Guinea... This was done in order for the car to be exported without being looted from them in turn by the more senior ULIMO-K commanders who controlled the roads" (*Mask of Anarchy* 1999, p.126).

Kromah, please admit your crimes! While you are bent on lying, Ellis' book is replete with historical accuracy. And, lets listen to Ellis again: "The looted mask, some of them very old, are said to have been sold on the international art market by Alhaji Kromah's right-hand man in Conakry, a Guinea dealer in African antiquities" (*Mask of Anarchy* 1999, p.128). Alhaji what was your share of the money earned on the mask? It is disgusting for a man who calls himself a devout Muslim to loot, desecrate and destroy other peoples' religious and cultural institutions. Will Kromah be happy if Liberian Mosque were looted as he did to the holy places of the Kpelles and the Lomas? But it appears that Kromah does not like Stephen Ellis' book, and now, it only make sense to turn to other sources to buttress the claims made by Ellis' "*Mask of Anarchy*".

For example, on September 28, 1996, Kromah and ULIMO-K brutally murdered hundreds of innocent Liberian women, children and defenseless men in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County. Kromah, please allow me to remind you of your crime and the list of your victims: Miaata Barlo, Lutee Barlo, Mama Barlo, Garti Barlo, Tata Barlo; Jenneh Barlo, Satta Barlo and Sanda Barlo. Mr. Kromah, how would you term the elimination of the Barlo family by men who took commands from you? Could this be genocide, or a crime against humanity? Please educate us on what constitutes genocide, and crimes against humanity. Beyond the Barlo family, there were other victims in Sinje as well: Varney Zodua, Bendu Zodua, Siatta Zodua; Mary Kenney; Emanuel Jesse, Morris Kiawu and Varney Farma.

Alhaji, do you remember Lucinii Sumai, Pop Joe, Sando (daughter of Mama Darwolo), Momo Zodua, Mary Boyah, and Sando the lady from Gunn Town? Knowing you Mr. Alhaji Kromah, I am sure you will apply the twist logic of Taylor to deny the crime you committed on September 28 1996. This author regrets the fact that time will not permit him to disclose the list of adductees, who were later murdered, and ULIMO-K fighters used their intestines as tool booths. Now, it only makes sense to disclose the name of top ULIMO-K executioners who carried out this heinous crime: Battle Front Commander, Jackson, Opa Sandi, Mack Typson, Jahanama, Operations,

Jabated, Col Dardo, Tarweh, Mohammed Dambodambo, and Po-Boy Sheriff. Let us not forget the victims and the fact that this massacre was carried out by ULIMO-K and Alhaji Kromah.

Let us now return to Kromah and Taylor's perverted logic. You see, these two men are driven by the same ideological convictions: they are ethnic chauvinist, opportunists, liars and low levels criminals. What is troubling about Kromah is that he does not seem to get over the fact that he is a Mandingo, and that Liberian Mandingoes shared Liberia with other ethnic groups. Beyond this, the only crimes he is aware of are those committed against 75 members of his family, and our Mandingo brothers and sisters who were murdered by Taylor's Gio and Mano thugs. As for the many Manos, Gios, Kpelles and Lomas whom his Mandingo thugs and imported illiterate Guinean rapists bayoneted in places like, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa and Bong Counties, were not humans enough, and their plights did not feature in Kromah's senseless tirades and proclamations. But for a man who has not transcended ethnicity to claim he wants to become the next president of a multi-ethnic nation like Liberia is deeply troubling. If he succeeds, every thing that is not Mandingo, or Guinean will have no place in Liberia. Quite frankly, Liberia does not need ethnic zealots like Kromah and Taylor who continues to manipulate ethnicity for political expediency. These career gangsters (i.e. Kromah and Taylor) need to be brought to justice for the crimes they committed against us. Other Liberian Warlords including General Prince deranged Johnson; Roosevelt confused Johnson, and Dr. George Murderer Boley need to be brought to justice too.

I have not used the words opportunists and ethnic chauvinists in vain. Note that Kromah is not one of the original founders of the ULIMO movements. Like Taylor, he ascended to the top post of ULIMO through coercion, murder and duplicity. Remember that Taylor was in the United States of America womanizing as usual, compiling Cs and Ds at Bentley College when Moses Duopu and other Nimbians founded NPFL. But, like his good old friend Kromah did to General Albert Karpeh, he killed Moses Duopu, Cooper Teah, and confined Benjamin Cooper to a brutal refugee life in Cocody La Cote Divoire. In their tales of loots and denials, Kromah and Taylor sought to turn everything in Liberia into some kind of family prosperity: Kromah turned the Liberian Finance Ministry into "Kromah's Family Inc." and appointed his brother Lasannah Kromah, who was instructed to withhold money from the National Bank of Liberia. While the Finance Ministry, or may I rightly say the "Kromah's Family Inc." owed the National Bank of Liberia 700 million Liberian dollars, or US 10 plus million dollars in 1995, the family ministry never made any payments to the National Bank of Liberia. Instead, the money was siphoned to Blanca Commerciale Italiana in New York. Liberians do not know what happened to their money, but Kromah and his family got very wealthy from the many crimes committed against Liberia and its people.

As for Taylor, he sent his older brother Nelson Taylor to Sinoe County to control what was left of the "Taylor's Inc." after George Boley's LPC dislodged the NPFL from



Sinoe County. Mr. Nelson Taylor got so busy running the family business that he forgot that Mr. Boley was also running the same business. When the two met, Nelson was ambushed, and roasted and eaten for supper. Remember that all of the Liberian factions stand accused of cannibalism.

One is tempted to go on and on about the twist immutable philosophy of Alhaji Kromah and Charles Taylor, but at this juncture, this author will take a break to focus on his next article title, "Kromah Again". This time around, I would consider the possibility for a UN tribunal for Liberia and would extend an invitation to the Liberian educated attorney, Mr. Alhaji G. V. Kromah to appear at a first tier American Law School in Washington DC to discuss the Liberian Genocide. I am rather hopeful that Mr. Kromah will accept my invitation.













